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ABSTRACT

A study was undertaken, in 1976 and for the three following years, of adult students in Australian higher education. The study examined: (1) the phenomenon of adult students and the extent of their involvement in higher education; (2) the politics and practices of institutions towards these students; (3) staff attitudes in the courses; (4) adult student characteristics; (5) why these students came to higher education institutions; (6) their problems, costs, and benefits; and (7) their success as students. In some cases these issues were examined at the national level, and in some cases at the local level, using Monash University as a case study. The results of the study are presented in some detail, with extensive data tables and narrative analysis. It is noted that there are two broad groups of mature age people entering higher education--those needing re-certification and those re-entering the academic world--and that the needs of these part-time students must be put into an institutional perspective. The staff survey instrument is included. (MSE)

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MATURE AGE STUDENTS IN AUSTRALIAN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Edited by
T. HORE
L. H. T. WEST

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Foreword

At one time it was fashionable to comment that universities were prepared to carry out research into any topic other than their own functioning, their personnel, their students and the impact of the university on the local community. Fortunately this charge can no longer be sustained partly because of the growth of the social sciences in recent years but also because of the creation of special units within universities, sometimes directed towards helping university teachers to teach more effectively, some times charged with providing data for the forward-planning which all large and expensive organizations require and sometimes dedicated to careful monitoring of the works of the institution in order to provide the factual base needed for effective day to day organization and management. Most often, these higher education units are engaged in several of these activities. We have to thank the Higher Education Advisory and Research Unit of Monash University for this study of an important and growing section of the student population in tertiary education — the mature students.

In view of the restricted sample of students surveyed the editors, Dr Terry Hore and Dr Leo West are suitably cautious about the extent to which the findings herein reported are capable of being generalized. Nevertheless, the experienced university teacher and administrator, including those working outside Australia, will recognize the picture painted here and will be grateful for the data and the commentary provided.

We have, for too long, stuck to what has been called the "vaccination" theory of education i.e. the theory that education is something which one received only when we are young. The result has been the creation of those curious ghettoes of the young called schools, colleges and universities where, as Lamb wickedly put it, the teachers are "boys among men and men among boys". Post World War II there was a marvellous late-forties renaissance when ex-service-men (and a few women) injected a refreshingly different approach to the task of being a student and then we slipped back to the *status quo antebellum* till lifelong education (as UNESCO called it), permanent education (Council of Europe) and recurrent education (OECD) came along in the 1960s to remind us that education is for all not merely for the young. Now we see the education of older students as part of the drive to bring so-called "new" populations into our tertiary level institutions.

The studies reported in the pages which follow lead us to ask whether our institutions have sufficiently considered to what extent the admission of members of the new populations — in this case mature students — makes it advisable to review traditional styles of organization and teaching. Are the procedures which have proved over the years to be well adapted to the styles of life and of learning of the traditional age groups, necessarily those best suited to the increasing numbers of mature students now being admitted to institutions of tertiary education? Universities and colleges have shown that

they are ready to open their gates to the new populations; that is to be commended but what is needed now is a firm intent to ensure that the arrangements within the gates are such as to create the conditions of study likely to permit members of the new populations to take full advantage of the opportunities provided.

The editors of the studies contained in this book are to be thanked for providing us with valuable data on a hitherto insufficiently researched area of study.

Professor Alec M. Ross,
Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic Affairs),
University of Lancaster, U.K.

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We wish first to express our gratitude to the many mature age students who participated in the studies that are described in this book — and indeed in a number of pilot studies that preceded those studies. Without exception, they opened themselves to us, allowing us to probe many personal issues. We also apologize to them for any distortions we have made to their thoughts, opinions, motivations, etc., and for any failure to communicate their sensitivity and their commitment to education in the broadest sense.

We wish to thank the many other people who readily gave their time: the registrars and their staff who provided the information about their institutions which formed the basis of Chapter 2; the researchers who generously shared with us their research, especially the many unpublished performance studies used in Chapter 4; the Monash staff who took the time and effort to complete the questionnaire used in Chapter 7.

We are indebted to our typist, Mrs. Margaret Rough who prepared our drafts and final manuscript with such care and good humour.

Leo West and Terry Hore

INTRODUCTION

Many older people in our society were deprived of higher education because of the era into which they were born. They are, relative to today's youth, educationally disadvantaged. When they were teenaged, very few of them had the opportunity to undertake higher education. Social mores of the time reserved that experience for a small proportion only of the age cohort. Further there was little need for them to obtain tertiary qualifications. Many occupations which now require a degree or diploma (for entry or qualification or both) had no such requirement twenty years ago. Obvious examples are primary teaching, accounting, many areas of the public service, banking, insurance, indeed commerce in general.

An educational revolution has occurred in the last twenty years. Now about 35 per cent of each age cohort complete secondary schooling at the highest level (compared to about 10 per cent twenty-five years ago); in 1974 there were more than 150 degrees granted by Universities in Australia per 100,000 of population compared to about 31 per 100,000 in 1955. Similar expansion has occurred in the other higher education sectors. Qualifications inflation continues to soar, with nursing about to become the latest occupation requiring a college education. The knowledge explosion and its accompanying technological revolution has made higher education training a must in many industries and professions.

All this has left many adults under-educated relative to their children and their workmates (often their subordinates) and as a consequence has limited their occupational mobility, especially for those who have been out of the workforce for some years and now wish to return.

Many of these adults are now accepting their chance to undertake a course in higher education. They represent the only growth area in a static higher education system. The growth in enrolments by older students in higher education during the seventies has been *the* phenomenon of education in that decade. They have become a significant minority on Australian campuses. They have been first class students; highly motivated, intellectual, stimulating and successful. They have also brought with them problems for themselves, or the institutions, for the staff and for their younger co-students; problems that need special attention.

OVERVIEW

The above comments anticipate the findings reported in this monograph. It describes the findings of a three year study of mature age students in higher education in Australia in general and at Monash University in particular. The research was directed by Leo West and Terry Hore of the Higher Education Advisory and Research Unit at Monash University. Other members of the research team were Pak Boon, Elena Eaton, Nigel Lawler and Anne Smurthwaite.

When we started in 1976, relatively little was known about this new phenomenon of mature age students in higher education in Australia. At that stage, probably the only published research on the topic was Greagg's 1974, Master of Education thesis. The research questions we took up reflect that situation. We explored

- the phenomenon of mature age involvement and its extent (Chapter 1).
- the policies and practices of institutions towards mature age students (Chapter 2).
- the attitudes of staff towards mature age students in their courses (Chapter 7).
- who they (the mature students) were, and where they come from (Chapter 5).
- why they were coming (Chapter 6).
- their problems, costs and benefits (Chapter 8)
- their success as students (Chapter 3 and 4)

Limited resources forced us to treat some of these questions at the local rather than the national level so that the generalizability of those findings are limited by that constraint.

To do justice to each part of the research, each is reported here by the researchers most closely involved with the particular part, although such compartmentalizing of researcher and research was never the reality. The projects were always team efforts. The disadvantage of this reporting method, apart from variations in style, is that the various research questions and their conclusions tend to remain isolated rather than integrated. Yet none of the questions addressed can truly be isolated.

The mature age student phenomenon of the 1970s in Australia grows out of the interaction between three complex sets: the higher education system (with its commissions, institutions, staff and students), the general community (with its mix of values and people), and the economic, especially the employment system. Over the decade each of these systems have been changing, and in each the rate of change has been rapid. The higher education system experienced a major discontinuity in growth during the decade; community values, especially towards education, have changed drastically; the employment sector has begun to cope with credentialism, the knowledge explosion and technological change. The mature age student in higher education phenomenon is a product of complex interactions between these systems. Some of these are obvious, some are subtle. The authors have tried to draw these out where it was possible, but it is important to recognize that we grew in our understanding of the phenomenon as the research developed. Our various snapshots of the phenomenon were the vehicles for our increased understanding of the total system. We hope that our presentation of them in that form will aid the reader to achieve the kind of insights that we have developed.

References

Greagg, L. The older student: Occupational choice and academic expectations. Unpublished M.Ed. thesis. Monash University, 1974.

Section 1.

THE GENERAL PICTURE

CHAPTER 1

The Phenomenon and its Extent in Australia

Elena G. Eaton and Leo H. T. West

1.1 *Introduction*

In many Western countries the influx of mature age students has constituted one of the most substantial enrolment changes in tertiary education over recent years. For instance, in the United States:

> ". . . the percentage of adult students, those beyond the usual 18-22 year old range, is now the fastest growing segment in higher education and makes up 48 percent of the total enrolment of ten million. Five years ago, students beyond age 22 constituted 39 percent of a total enrolment of eight million".
>
> (Maeroff, 1975, p.9)

The same trend is evident in Australia, where the increase in university participation rates after 1973 has been due primarily to higher rates for mature age students (Borrie *et al.*, 1978).

> "In considering the requirements for tertiary educational opportunities in Australia over the next few years, . . . it is necessary to look beyond the 17 to 22 years age group which is the one usually used when calculating participation rates in universities and colleges of advanced education. This group includes only about 60 percent of total enrolments in universities and colleges of advanced education and less than 50 percent in the TAFE institutions". (p.31)

The first section of this chapter deals with the age distribution of entrants to universities, CAEs and TAFE institutions. This information, together with demographic data regarding population projections, has been extracted from the report by the Tertiary Education Committee for the 1979-81 Triennium (1978). Section 1.2 provides a more detailed picture of the current involvement of mature age students and is based on Anderson *et al.*'s (1978) system-wide study of the characteristics of students in Australian higher education. The final section concerns the increase in the rate of mature age student participation in university education during the '70s. (Readers interested in the extent of the phenomenon overseas as well as in Australia are referred to the recent report by Dickson *et al.* (1979) which includes a study of mature age education in the U.S.A. and the U.K.)

Table 1.1 shows Australian tertiary enrolments according to age over a four year period, 1974 to 1977.

TABLE 1.1

Tertiary enrolments, by age, Australia 1974-1977

Age (Years)	1974	1976	1977	1978
		UNIVERSITIES		
	%	%	%	%
Under 23	60.7	60.4	58.4	57.6
23–39	34.8	34.7	36.2	36.7
40 and over	4.5	4.9	5.4	5.7
TOTAL(a)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	COLLEGES OF ADVANCED EDUCATION			
	%	%	%	
Under 23	68.0	63.5	60.8	
23–39	29.0	32.3	34.4	Not
40 and over	3.0	4.2	4.8	available
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0	
	TAFE INSTITUTIONS (b)			
	%	%	%	
Under 21	44.0	44.3	41.9	
21–29	31.3	29.8	30.1	Not
30 and over	24.8	25.9	28.0	available
TOTAL	100.0	100.0	100.0	

(a) Percentages in all tables are presented to one decimal place and therefore some totals do not tally to 100.

(b) Partly estimated. Does not include Australian Capital Territory or Northern Territory.

Source: TEC Report, 1978

Demographic data, tabled in the same report and reproduced below (Table 1.2), show that the groups aged 23 and older will continue to grow over the next two decades.

Based on demographics alone, it is evident that the proportion of older people among the intakes to higher education will increase in the future. The 17–22 age group will grow at a much slower rate than the older age groups, so that if we assume unchanged participation rates from each group the proportion of older people in the intakes must increase. It should be noted that in student number projections of William *et al.* (1979), it is

Table 1.2
Population projections (a), selected ages, Australia, 1977-1997

Age (Years)	1977	1982	1987	1992	1997
	'000	'000	'000	'000	'000
17–22	1,474	1,563	1,525	1,600	1,441
23–39	3,519	3,944	4,272	4,411	4,591
40–59	2,951	3,081	3,330	3,722	4,172

(a) Based on net migration of 40,000 persons a year.
Source: TEC Report, 1978.

assumed that the proportion of indirect entrants (those enrolling two or more years later than leaving school) to universities and CAEs will grow in proportion to the increase in the 20-40 age group. Of course, the participation rates may not remain constant but current trends indicate that if they change they will change in a direction that will lead to an increase in mature student involvement.

There has been in Australia a recent decline in the number of people in the 17–22 age group entering higher education — despite the continued growth of the age cohort. Similar declines in participation rates have occurred in other Western countries during the '70s. In at least a few of them it appears that the very students who caused the sudden downturn in higher education enrolments in the early seventies began to take up places as mature age students around 1975, thus causing a recent upturn in tertiary enrolments. This suggests that the trend is not a rejection of higher education but a postponement followed by entry a few years later (see Cerych, 1977). Thus whatever the reasons for the current involvement of mature age students in higher education in Australia (to be discussed in detail in Chapter 6), there is a distinct possibility that their numbers will be augmented by those of the present 17–22 year old cohort who are postponing but not rejecting entry into higher education.

Therefore, it seems likely that the future proportion of mature age entrants to universities in Australia will increase beyond the present level. It is appropriate to examine the current extent and recent growth rate of mature age involvement in higher education in Australia.

1.2 *The extent of mature age student current involvement in higher education in Australia*

A recent report by Anderson *et al.* (1978) has provided valuable and much needed information about the system-wide situation in Australia where entering students beyond the usual 17–22 age group are concerned.

The sample used in this analysis was constructed to correspond to the characteristics of the populations of the institutions concerned on three variables — sex, faculty and type of enrolment. The use of these three variables which are important in the organization of enrolment procedures ensures that the final samples are likely to correspond fairly closely to the

population of students in higher education in Australia.

Table 1.3 shows the participation rates of commencing students by age and by sex in 1976.

Table 1.3
Participation rates of commencing tertiary students by age and by sex in 1976

Age	Universities		Metropolitan Colleges		Country Colleges	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
	%	%	%	%	%	%
17-21	78.9	72.4	69.3	80.7	88.0	93.0
22-24	6.7	6.1	10.5	3.4	3.2	1.9
25+	13.6	20.4	19.1	13.9	7.8	4.2
Not stated	0.8	1.2	0.8	2.0	1.0	0.8
TOTAL Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total Number	3,002	2,073	1,947	1,517	682	924

Source: Anderson *et al.*, 1978.

It is evident that female mature age students are likely to be older than their male counterparts in universities, although the reverse is true in the CAEs.

Table 1.4 shows the distribution, by sex, of years students had spent since schooling (for mature age students, schooling means *original* schooling) and commencing a tertiary course in 1976.

Table 1.4
Distribution of number of years students spent between schooling and commencing a tertiary course in 1976, by sex

Years School	Universities		Metropolitan Colleges		Country Colleges	
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females
	%	%	%	%	%	%
None	65.5	60.9	53.6	71.4	65.7	83.5
1	8.8	7.1	11.0	5.9	11.1	6.8
2	4.0	2.7	4.6	2.5	5.3	1.1
3-5	6.8	6.4	10.6	4.5	7.5	2.8
6-10	6.6	7.7	10.7	4.5	4.3	1.0
More than 10	7.1	14.3	8.7	9.9	4.3	3.8
Not stated	1.2	0.8	0.8	1.3	1.9	1.0
Total Percent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total Number	3,002	2,078	1,947	1,519	682	924

Source: Anderson *et al.*, 1978

Twenty-two per cent of the females in the universities had breaks of at least six years and of these nearly two-thirds had been absent for more than ten years.

Table 1.5 shows the distribution of younger and older students between faculties in universities and metropolitan colleges in 1976.

Table 1.5

Distribution of younger and older students between faculties in universities and metropolitan colleges in 1976

Type of institution and age	Faculty							
	% Science	% Commerce	% Arts	% Education	% Engineering	% Law	% Medicine	% Other
Universities								
Age 17-21	87.9	79.6	67.4	61.4	96.8	81.3	94.5	83.3
22+	12.1	20.4	32.6	38.6	3.2	18.7	5.5	16.7
Total Per cent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total Number	1,047	687	1,808	163	436	273	348	318
	% Science	% Commerce	% Arts	% Education	% Engineering	% Medicine	% Other	
Metropolitan Colleges								
Age 17-21	79.5	66.4	71.5	85.5	75.0	86.7	82.5	
22+	20.5	33.6	28.5	14.5	25.0	13.3	17.5	
Total Per cent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	
Total Number	381	832	379	1,104	411	45	314	

Source: Anderson *et al.*, 1978

It is evident that the distribution of older students among faculties is far from uniform, especially in the universities where they tend to be concentrated in the faculties of Arts and Education. The fact that science and engineering courses in the CAEs attract a far greater proportion of older

students suggests that it is the selection process rather than aspiration which operates to exclude them from university studies (Anderson *ibid.*).

Another marked difference between older and younger students is that, as age increases, the likelihood of a student enrolling on a full-time basis decreases. Table 1.6 illustrates the extent of this difference.

Table 1.6

Type of student enrolment by age for each type of institution

	Universities		Metropolitan Colleges		Country Colleges	
Age Group	Full time	Part time	Full time	Part time	Full time	Part time
	%	%	%	%	%	%
17–21	87.6	24.1	84.5	43.9	92.2	21.9
22+	11.4	75.4	13.8	55.9	6.9	78.1
Not stated	1.0	0.7	1.7	0.2	0.9	0.0
Total Per cent	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total Number	4,168	912	2,605	861	1,577	32

Source: Anderson *et al.*, 1978

Valuable as the Anderson *et al.* study is in providing us with an overall picture of the present involvement of older students (i.e. over 22 years of age) in tertiary education in Australia, we need longitudinal data in order to assess the growth rate of this group.

1.3 *Growth in the '70s*

We have seen from Table 1.1 that the proportions of entrants over 22 years of age increased significantly in all sectors of tertiary education during the period 1974 to 1977. However, 1974 was the year in which fees were abolished and the Tertiary Education Assistance Scheme was established. As Slamowics *et al.* (1976) pointed out, if we only had data from 1974 onwards it would be tempting to assume that the increase in the proportion of mature age entrants was due to these changes.

Fortunately data for preceding years, based on annual audits of entering students, are available for both the University of Melbourne and Monash University. Figure 1.1 shows that the proportion of entrants aged 25 and over to Monash has almost tripled since 1970. The growth is even more spectacular when considered on a faculty basis. In the Faculty of Arts, the percentage of mature age entrants (25+) has risen from 9.6 per cent in 1970 to nearly 28 per cent in 1978. The data also indicate that the trend towards increasing participation of this group existed well before the time of fee abolition and the introduction of TEAS.

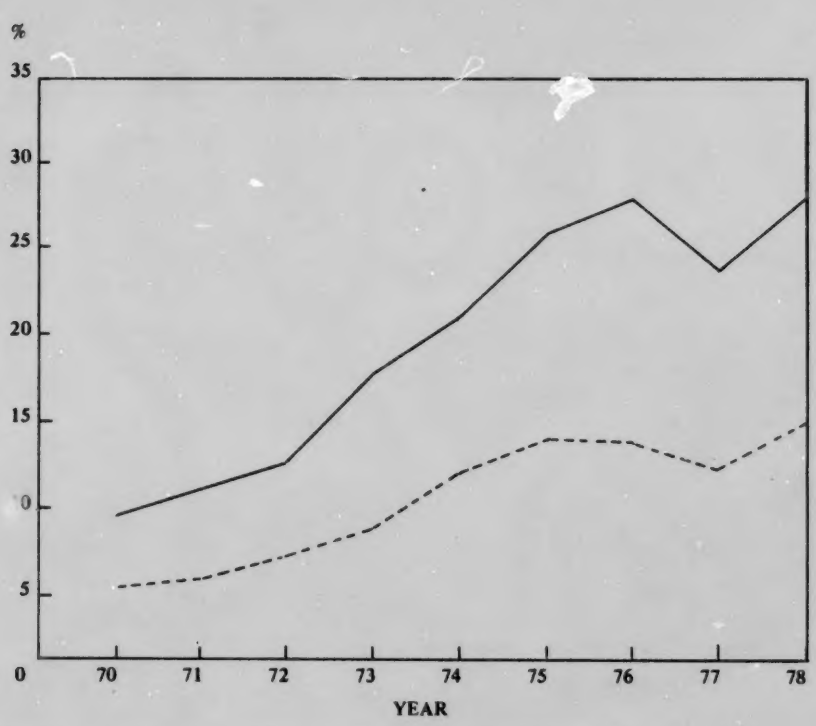

Figure 1 . 1 Percentage of entrants to Monash University aged 25 and over, 1970 – 1978

It is likely that a similar growth rate has occurred at the University of Melbourne as little difference exists between Monash and Melbourne where the characteristics of entering students are concerned (see Smurthwaite, 1974). In fact it is reasonable to assume that Monash Univesity is fairly representative of well-established universities throughout Australia, since the findings of a study analysing trends and biases in entrants to Monash (Slamowicz *et al.*, 1976) are highly consistent with those reported in Anderson *et al.*'s system-wide study. This, together with the availability of long term data, makes Monash an appropriate subject for a detailed investigation of the phenomenon of mature age student involvement in Australian university education. (See Section 2: Monash as a Case Study).

The Monash study defines mature age students as those aged 25 and over at time of entry. This definition was chosen in order to avoid including deferred students who make up a considerable proportion of those aged between 22 and 24. Deferrers are likely to differ from mature age students on such characteristics as original schooling, reasons for delaying entry, motivation, family and work commitments, for example, and thus constitute a separate study in themselves.

Table 1.7 shows the Monash intakes of first year students according to three age groups: 16 to 21, 22 to 24, and 25 and over. The proportions in the middle age group have remained relatively stable compared to a quite dramatic increase in the 25 and over group.

Table 1.7

Age distribution of entrants to Monash, 1970-1978

Year	Age 16-21 %	Age 22-24 %	Age 25 and over %
1970	90.6	3.8	5.5
1971	90.0	4.1	5.8
1972	90.1	3.0	6.9
1973	87.9	3.5	8.7
1974	84.3	3.8	12.0
1975	83.2	3.4	13.5
1976	82.6	3.7	13.5
1977	83.5	4.2	12.2
1978	81.1	4.1	14.8

Table 1.8 shows the proportion of each mature age student intake in the various age groups; a fairly consistent trend towards an increase in the proportion those over 40 years of age is apparent.

Table 1.8

Age distribution of mature age entrants to Monash, 1970-1978

Year	Age 25-30 %	Age 31-40 %	Age 40 and over %
1970	56.5	34.3	9.3
1971	58.8	32.1	9.2
1972	49.3	34.7	16.0
1973	44.1	38.7	17.2
1974	52.3	34.7	13.0
1975	44.0	39.0	17.0
1976	42.2	40.0	18.0
1977	45.5	38.6	15.9
1978	41.2	36.9	22.0

It is evident that mature age enrolment in tertiary studies has been an area of extraordinary growth over the last decade. While a study of the phenomenon is valuable in its own right, the question as to whether the present rate of growth will continue has important implications for both government and institutional policy decisions. It was partly in order to help answer this question that the Monash study was undertaken.

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CHAPTER 2

Policies and Practices of Tertiary Institutions in Australia Towards Mature Age Students.

Leo H. T. West, Pak K. Boon & Ann M. Smurthwaite

2.1 *Introduction*

In this survey an attempt was made to obtain an overview of the phenomenon of mature age student enrolment in tertiary institutions throughout Australia. The survey covers all types of tertiary institutions and describes the situation in late 1976.

In all, 113 tertiary institutions were approached. (Tertiary institutions listed in *Directory of Tertiary Courses 1976* with the exception of a few judged as inappropriate.) Responses were obtained from 98 institutions. The survey asked for information on

- whether the institution had special entry schemes or other methods of entry for mature aged applicants
- what were the selection procedures
- the number of mature age entrants in 1976
- the courses in which they were enrolled

A summary of the replies for each institution is given in Tables 2.4 to 2.7. Institutions were classified according to universities, colleges of advanced education, teachers' colleges and single-purpose institutions. The State Colleges of Victoria were included among the teachers' colleges although their equivalent institutions in other states tend to be CAEs. However, the division was merely a matter of convenience and is not intended to imply difference. It must be emphasized that these Tables impose a structure on the responses and so involve some loss of information and perhaps some distortion. This is the price we must pay for reducing the responses to a form that aids comparison and interpretation. Even so, the Tables run to many pages. To further reduce the data to allow an overview to be gained, Tables 2.1 to 2.3 have been produced. These "summaries of the summaries" must be seen for what they are — an attempt to give a general overview. The categories are artificial and lead to considerable distortion of the original responses in some instances. However, they provide general outlines that are reasonably accurate. Readers are encouraged to consult the detailed Tables (2.4 to 2.7) to fill out these outlines.

One other general word of caution is needed. There are various interpretations of mature age students. The two main divisions are "over 21" and "25 and over", but other definitions are used. For instance, some institutions admit, under special provisions, entrants who have had at least two years' break from school — and classify them as "mature age" students.

In Tables 2.1 to 2.3 the term mature age students is used very loosely to include those groups that are interpreted as such by their institutions. Tables 2.4 to 2.7 give details of the actual definition used by each institution (where it is known).

2.2 *Requirements for entry*

Nearly all institutions have some relaxed entry provisions for mature age students. Of these, some have used existing provisions within their regulations to allow mature age students to enter (i.e. not as normal entrants) while others have introduced special schemes. Table 2.1 summarizes the *minimum* requirement route available to all mature students. The categorization of "*minimum . . . to all mature students*" means that the Monash Early Leavers' Scheme, for example, would not be considered under the "no HSC required" category as it is not an avenue available to *all* mature age students, but requires the statement of "disadvantage" in order to qualify.

Table 2.1
Categorization of minimum entry requirements
(Available to all potential mature age entrants)

	Universities (N=19)	C.A.E.s & Teachers' Colleges (N=65)	Single Purpose Colleges (N=14)
Full HSC required	0	3	3
Part HSC required (or recognized equivalents)	10	1	0
No HSC required	7	49	10
No HSC required but **must not** have attempted HSC	2	12	1

The greater relative frequency of the "No HSC required" in the CAEs and teachers' colleges was not surprising. It was surprising that we had to add a sub-category of "No HSC required" — in which HSC *must* not have been attempted. The logic of this position was not explained by the respondents.

2.3 *Selection methods*

Selection methods vary considerably and usually involve multiple procedures (e.g. special test plus interview). Table 2.2 provides a summary of the methods that are used in selection — thus 10 universities use special tests as part of their selection method. Some institutions need more than one method hence the columns sum to more than the numbers given at the top of the columns for number of institutions.

Table 2.2

Frequency of use of various methods in (at least) part of the selection of mature age students

	Universities (N=19)	C.A.E.s & Teachers' Colleges (N=65)	Single Purpose Colleges (N=14)
Scores on part HSC or equivalent	9	2	0
Special tests	10	37	3
Interview	5	44	5
Work references or experience	6	28	4
Certain academic background	5	24	7

Numbers of mature age students expressed as proportions of the total student population are given in Table 2.3. Not all respondents gave numbers and some only gave the numbers in specific courses. It should be remembered different institutions used different definitions of mature age students and so this summary needs to be interpreted with some care. The number of institutions which gave no response in this section prevents any real estimate of the extent of mature age involvement from this data. The overall figures tend to hide high incidence in some areas. The growth figures at Monash (Slamowics, *et al.*, 1976) certainly indicated continued growth in that institution.

Table 2.3

Numbers of mature age students in tertiary institutions

	Universities	C.A.E.s & Teachers' Colleges	Single Purpose Colleges
No response	13	28	5
0-5%	2	5	3
6-10%	2	16	3
11-15%	1	6	0
16%+	1	8	0
Not applicable	0	3	3

2.4 *Conclusions*

Although this study was primarily descriptive, it is possible to make some speculative inferences. It is reasonable to see the initial move towards acceptance of mature age students into tertiary institutions being based on supply/demand consideration. The greater "openness" of C.A.E.s to mature age students (Table 2.1) is consistent with this proposition.

However, it seems from certain comments made by the respondents that some institutions have adopted a positive commitment to mature age students because of their good performance (see Chapters 3, 4 and 7) and/or their influence on the institution (i.e. their "success" as students). The reaction of these institutions is now based on demand/success considerations, that is, while the demand exists they will continue to accept students irrespective of supply considerations. As evidence of this, a number of institutions have now set separate quotas for these students (for example, they have removed them from competition with normal students and therefore made their entry independent of the supply of normal students). Some have stated that they intend to increase their intake because of the success of mature age students (e.g. the University of Adelaide) and one institution actually aims to give preference to mature age students (Macquarie University). This "demand/success" model is discussed more fully in Chapter 9.

TABLES 2.4 to 2.7 — Summaries of Responses from 98 Tertiary Institutions

(Abbreviations used)

S.E.S. — Special Entry Scheme

P — Existing provisions in the institute's statutes are used to admit "unqualified" mature age entrants.

N.P. — No existing provisions for admitting "unqualified" mature age entrants.

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TABLE 2.4 — Universities: Mature Age Students

INSTITUTION	PROVISIONS	AGE	METHODS OF SELECTION	COURSES	NUMBER (%)	PERFORMANCE & OTHER INFORMATION
UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE (S.A.)	S.E.S. 3 P a) Special Entry Scheme b) Matriculated under past requirements c) Adult Matric Scheme d) Post secondary qualification	a) 21+ b) Open c) 21+ d) Open	a) Special Entry Eligibility i) S.A. resident for 12 months ii) 21 years of age or left school for 5 years iii) Not qualified to matriculate Method i) Essay ii) Interview Eligibility (for b) c) & d)) b) Matriculated under old regulations c) i) Reduced matriculation requirement ii) 21 years of age or left school 33 months d) Post secondary or equivalent qualification	a) All faculties except Medicine and Dentistry b) c) & d) All faculties	a) 26 (1976) b) c) & d) No information	Performance of first intake so successful that 60 places made available in 1977. Few Special Entrants enrolled in Science.
THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL UNIVERSITY (A.C.T.)	P Special Admission a) Those without normal HSC b) Those attempting HSC (part time)	Not Relevant	a) Applicants without normal HSC qualifications are considered separately on the basis of secondary and post secondary studies, age, employment and other qualifications. b) Those attempting part time HSC must i) Have left school for 3 years ii) Pass 6 HSC units at one sitting.	All faculties Arts Asian Studies Economics Law Science	No information	The selection procedure is under review because of proposed abolition of HSC in the ACT. Because of large number of mature age entrants age in itself no guarantee of entry.
THE FLINDERS UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA	S.E.S. F a) Mature Entry Scheme b) Provisional Matriculation	a) 25+ b) Not Specified	Method a) i) Essay - on why want to enter university and why have not matriculated ii) Aptitude test (2 hrs, ACER) iii) Interview (3 members of staff) Eligibility b) Provisional matriculation or equivalent	All faculties except Medicine (see last column)	a) 100(1976) 10% b) Provisional entrants 20% (1975)	a) Applicants in Science must demonstrate adequate background. Not eligible to enter Medicine under this scheme. But Medical faculty will give special consideration to applications from 'non-matriculated persons who have a background suitable for further study in Medicine'.

GRIFFITH UNIVERSITY (QLD.)	S.E.S. Special Admission	Not Specified	Eligibility i) Previously enrolled and excluded from other tertiary institution, or ii) At least 22 years of age, no formal qualifications but experienced employment background, or iii) Part External Senior Examination Method i) Secondary school record ii) Post secondary courses and qualifications iii) Employment history iv) References v) Statement of why want to study at Griffith	All schools Environmental Studies Humanities Modern Asian Studies Science	Not set quota. No information about number of entrants.	Special consideration is also available to applicants who have previously completed secondary education or whose academic record adversely affect-ed by special circumstances. These applications are handled by the Qld. Tertiary Admissions Ctre Applicants under the Special Admissions Scheme are allocated a notional Tertiary Entrance Score and then compete with other candidates.
JAMES COOK UNIVERSITY OF NORTH QUEENSLAND	P Provisional Matriculation	Open	Eligibility No set regulation Method Applications assessed individually by Admissions Sub-Committee. On basis of - i) Personal maturity ii) Employment experience iii) Previous scholastic achievement iv) Other qualifications. Each applicant must convince the Sub-Committee that he has a reasonable chance of success.	All faculties Arts Commerce and Economics Education Engineering Science	(11%) (1975) (9%) (1976)	Performance compares favourably with the achievement of "normal" entrants. Although all courses open to provisional entrants few enrol in Science and Engineering.
LA TROBE UNIVERSITY (VIC.)	2 S.E.S. a) Early Leavers b) Special Entry	a) 18+ b) 20+	Eligibility a) i) Must not have attempted or be attempting full HSC b) i) As above ii) Employed in Science or relevant industrial field. Method (for both schemes) i) Essay - on why not matriculated and reasons for wishing to enter University. ii) Aptitude Test (ASAT)(ACER) iii) Interview.	a) Humanities Social Sciences b) Physical Science	a) 120 (1976) 100 in Humanities 20 in Social Sciences. b) 30 (1976)	The Early Leavers Scheme was introduced in 1972 and the number of places offered has increased each year from 20 (1972) to 120 (1976).

TABLE 2.4 (Cont'd)

INSTITUTION	PROVISIONS	AGE	METHODS OF SELECTION	COURSES	NUMBER (%)	PERFORMANCE & OTHER INFORMATION
MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY (N.S.W.)	2P a) Provisional matriculation - Limited HSC programme b) Other qualifications	a)25+ b)21+	a) Grades 1,2 or 3 in two HSC subjects taken as two Unit A courses or higher. Selected on aggregate of best four units. b) Normally completion of some formal study such as specified certificate courses. Applications considered individually.	All courses	a) 213 (7.5%) (1976) b) 222 (7.8%) (1976)	Preference for admission to B.A. and B.A. Dip.Ed. was given in 1977 to qualified applicants aged 25 and over. a) 90% achieved minimum rate of progress in their first year b) 77% achieved minimum rate of progress in their first year
UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE (VIC.)	P S.E.S. a) Special Regulation (1.1 Section 2) b) Law Faculty Scheme.	a) Open b) 25+	a) 'The Professorial Board in special cases may declare any person eligible for admission to any course for a degree or diploma in the University...' b)Law Faculty Eligibility i) Disadvantaged. Full time HSC in year prior to entry. Pass in English. Method Interview. School reports. Applicants written submissions. Eligibility ii) Mature Age. 25+ years or left school for 10 years. Method Interview. Law School Admission Test. Other qualifications: HSC attempts, applicant's written submissions.	a) All faculties b) Law	b) 25 (10 mature age) 10% of Law Faculty intake (1976)	a) Professorial Board Regulation has been used for admission of aboriginal students. E-type entrants at Melbourne compete with M-type students for entry.

MONASH UNIVERSITY (VIC.)	2 S.E.S. a) Disadvantaged b) Early Leavers	Open	a) Eligibility Passed HSC with necessary pre-requisites. Method Demonstrate reasons for disadvantage. b) Eligibility i) Left school for 5 years ii) Able to demonstrate reasons for being educationally/socially disadvantaged iii) Must not have completed HSC Method i) Written application ii) Aptitude test (ASAT)(ACER) iii) Interview (at faculty's discretion)	All faculties Arts Law Economics Science Medicine Engineering	4% of places in each faculty may be reserved for these entrants. In fact the number seldom exceeds 3%.	b) In practice the faculties of Science , Engineering and Medicine have only admitted one Early Leaver entrant from 1974-1977. Although the performance of Early Leavers has been very good there are no plans to increase the number of entrants.
MURDOCH. UNIVERSITY (W.A.)	P	Open	No students selected on basis of HSC score alone. Method i) School reports ii) Essays iii) Curriculum vitae iv) Submissions by the applicants	University Part I year (Quotas are imposed in Education and Veterinary Science)	Approximately 100 places in Part I reserved for students with unusual or disadvantaged background.	
THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW ENGLAND (N.S.W.)	2 S.E.S. a) Adult Matric. Status b) Mature Age	a) 20+ b) 25+	a) Eligibility No set regulations Method Each applicant assessed individually on - i) Personal maturity/ability to undertake studies successfully ii) Employment experience iii) Other qualifications iv) Education level b) Eligibility Not eligible under a) Method Letter setting out reasons for believing that they are capable of successfully undertaking studies	All faculties Arts Economic Studies Rural Science Science School of Natural Resources	a) No quotas b) 200 places reserved, of these 50 places for internal students	a) Ordinary or special matriculants over the age of 20 who have undertaken post-secondary studies are ranked subjectively vis à vis normal entrants. b) Scheme commenced in 1974.

TABLE 2.4 (Cont'd)

INSTITUTION	PROVISIONS	AGE	METHODS OF SELECTION	COURSES	NUMBER (%)	PERFORMANCE & OTHER INFORMATION
THE UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE (N.S.W.)	3 S.E.S. a) Mature Age b) Open Foundation Course c) Disadvantaged	a) 23+ b) 23+ c) Open	a) Method i) Limited, prescribed HSC studies varying according to faculty ii) Evidence of ability to undertake studies, or iii) Acceptable post secondary qualifications b) Method Satisfactory completion of a programme of studies over one year conducted by Open Foundation Course at the University. c) Method Statement of disadvantage	a) & c) Architecture Arts Economics Engineering Mathematics Science b) Arts Economics	No quotas Approximately 60 p.a.	a) Not decided yet whether entrants under special schemes able to enrol in new medical faculty. b) Those selected through the Open Foundation Course performing better than 'normal' entry students.
THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES	2 S.E.S. P a) Special Scheme b) Reduced HSC c) Special Cases	25+	Eligibility Unmatriculated Method Special Scheme i) Essay & questionnaire ii) Information relevant to capacity to succeed in University studies iii) Induction course - introduction to University, academic studies, participation in classes etc. Places are offered to those who successfully complete the Induction course Reduced H.S.C. program Aggregate of marks in best five units of limited program. Special individual cases Applications are considered where ability sufficient to justify admission can be shown in academic or professional fields or by published work.	All courses except Medicine	a) 63 in 1976 b) 59 in 1976 c) 2 in 1976	The performance of M.A.U. students appears to be better than that of the general student body. Scheme a) was introduced in 1974, Scheme b) in 1975, Scheme c) has existed for some time.
W.S. & L.B. ROBINSON UNIVERSITY COLLEGE. (UNI. OF N.S.W.)	Mature Age P	Not Specified	No special provisions	Not Specified	Not Specified	Most students are mature age and part time. Where an inadequate background for a course of study advised to undertake HSC.

THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND	S.E.S.	21+	Method Applicants are awarded a notional Tertiary Entrance score by the Dean of the Faculty on 'the basis of his evaluation of their capacity to complete University study.' Students then compete with other entrants.	All courses	No set quota (16.7% in 1973)	Students under this Scheme have generally enrolled in Arts.
THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY (N.S.W.)	2 S.E.S. a) Mature Age b) Other Special Admission	25+ Open	a) Eligibility i) May or may not have matriculated ii) Post secondary qualifications or experience. Method i) Aptitude and general studies tests ii) Interview iii) Entry may be conditional on completion of a prescribed course of study supplementary to course. Students granted Provisional Matriculation. Enrolment confirmed after satisfactory first year. b) Eligibility i) May or may not have matriculated ii) Evidence of disadvantage during secondary school and ability to undertake studies Method (see under a) above)	All courses (but see last column re Medicine and Vet. Science)	Overall quota of 80 places (1978)	Both Schemes introduced in 1977. Open to all faculties except that applicants to Medicine & Veterinary Science must demonstrate 'outstanding ability'. In the past under the old scheme Provisional matriculants have performed very well.
THE UNIVERSITY OF TASMANIA	3 P Provisional Matriculation a) 2 HSC subjects at Level III standard b) No HSC c) No HSC but other tertiary qualifications	a) 21+ b) 23+ c) Open	Eligibility Resident of Tasmania for 6 months. (Those who are not are considered separately) Method i) Recommendation of the Dean of faculty ii) Decision made by Admissions Committee iii) Sometimes interview required No set regulations for granting full matric. status	All faculties (but see last column)	100 - 125 entrants each year	Applicants usually need HSC prerequisites in order to be considered for faculties of Medicine, Engineering and Agricultural Science. Most provisional matriculants enter Arts, Law, Education. Their results at least as good as normal entrants but tend to have higher withdrawal rate. Scheme operating for 35 years.

TABLE 2.4 (Cont'd)

INSTITUTION	PROVISIONS	AGE	METHODS OF SELECTION	COURSES	NUMBER (%)	PERFORMANCE & OTHER INFORMATION
THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA	2 P a) Mature Age Examination b) Provisional Admission	a) 21+ b) i) 21+ ii) Open	a) Reduced matriculation requirement adjusted to be competitive with other applicants. b) i) Able to demonstrate aptitude for study OR ii) Completion of first year of recognised course at another institution iii) Completion of another recognised course Initially granted provisional admission. Full status confirmed on satisfactory completion of first year.	a) Arts Economics & Commerce Physical Education Special Education b) Arts Economics & Commerce Education Engineering Medicine Dental Science Agriculture Science	No set quota Total mature age entrants 232 (12%) (1976) 222 (10%) (1977)	Requirements of the faculties of Engineering, Medicine and Dental Science are very strict for granting provisional entry. Most mature age students enter Arts. In 1976 none entered Medicine and Dental Science. A comparison of the performance of students who entered via the Mature Age Exam., in 1975, showed that they performed at least as well as other groups of students.
THE UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG (N.S.W.)	S.E.S. Special Admissions Programme	21+	Eligibility Unmatriculated Method i) Aptitude test (ASAT) (ACER) ii) Essay Applicants may be advised to complete some further study before seeking admission.	All faculties (but see last column)	51 (6%) (1975) 79 (11%) (1976)	Applicants must satisfy prerequisites in Sciences and Engineering. Chiefly enter Arts and Commerce. Scheme set up in 1975. Because of good performance of 1975 entrants the number was increased in 1976.

TABLE 2.5 — Colleges of Advanced Education: Mature Age Students

ADELAIDE COLLEGE OF ADVANCED EDUCATION (S.A.)	P Provisional Entry	a) 21+ b) <21 c) Open	Eligibility Not matriculated Method i) Interview ii) Aptitude test (ASAT) (ACER)	Teacher Education (Secondary)	No set quota 30 (1975)	Precedence given to holders of S.A. Education Dept. scholarships - available to some mature age (25+) students. Students are performing as well as normal entrants.
ALEXANDER MACKIE COLLEGE OF ADVANCED EDUCATION (N.S.W.)	P	Mature	Eligibility i) Must not be sitting for HSC ii) Must possess some other qualification or experience Selection i) Satisfactory level of education ii) Capacity to undertake particular course of study iii) Interview iv) Art Folio/audition in relevant courses	All courses Art Art Education Music Education (Primary Teaching)	208 (18%) (1976)	

BALLARAT COLLEGE OF ADVANCED EDUCATION (VIC.)	P Special Consideration	21+	Eligibility Do not have normal prerequisites Method a) Education courses i) Aptitude test ii) Communication skills test iii) Interview b) Science/Engineering Tertiary Orientation Year c) Others Interview - assessment of motivation	a) Education (Primary) b) Science/ Engin. courses c) General studies (Community studies)	a) Education (7%) c) Non-science courses (12%)	
BENDIGO COLLEGE OF ADVANCED EDUCATION (VIC.)	2 S.E.S. a) Mature b) Special Admission (Aborigines)	a) 23+ b) Open	Method a) i) Interview ii) Test (ACER) b) Interview	Education (Primary)	a) (5%) b) This scheme to operate in 1977	Mature students performing better than normal entrants.
CANBERRA COLLEGE OF ADVANCED EDUCATION (A.C.T.)	P	Not Specified	Method Individual consideration on basis of - i) Educational standard ii) Work experience iii) Aptitude test iv) Motivation	All courses Admin. Studies Applied Science Environmental Design Information Science Liberal Studies Teacher Education	Approx. 10% of applicants	Where doubt exists about ability to undertake studies sometimes students admitted conditionally. Enrolment confirmed on completion of normal full time or part time load.
CAPRICORNIA INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED EDUCATION (QLD.)	P	Not Specified	Eligibility Does not have formal entrance qualifications Method i) Written application - other qualifications and experience taken into consideration ii) Capacity to undertake studies iii) Interview	All under-graduate courses Arts Business Applied Science Education Engineering	No fixed quota 36 (7%) (1976)	The Bachelor of Arts course absorbs most of the mature age students.

TABLE 2.5 (Cont'd)

INSTITUTION	PROVISIONS	AGE	METHODS OF SELECTION	COURSES	NUMBER (%)	PERFORMANCE & OTHER INFORMATION
CAULFIELD INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (VIC.)	P	Open	Method In the case of student without HSC or equivalent standard, an applicant may be considered on basis of:- i) 3 or more years employment experience, and ii) academic background or other evidence of ability to succeed Admissions Committee may prescribe course of study for the first year and standard to be attained.	All courses Applied Science Business Engineering General Studies Industrial/ Studies Orientation/ Studies	101 (6%)	
CHURCHLANDS COLLEGE OF ADVANCED EDUCATION (W.A.)	P Mature Age	21+	Eligibility Do not possess minimum qualifications Method i) IQ test (B40) (ACER) ii) Essay test iii) Interview	All courses Teacher/ Education (Primary) (Early Childhood) Business/ Studies	Teacher Education (Primary) Maximum of 20% Actual 23 (10%) (1976) (Early Childhood) Actual 10 (13%)	No limit on number of mature age students admitted to Business Studies course.
CUMBERLAND COLLEGE OF HEALTH SCIENCES (N.S.W.)	P	23+	Eligibility Alternative qualification or experience Method Normally consists of:- i) Aptitude or other test ii) Interview	Speech/ Pathology Occupational/ Therapy Physiotherapy Nursing Orthoptics Medical/ Record/ Administration	50 (10%) (1977)	
EMILY McPHERSON COLLEGE (VIC.)	P	Not Specified	Eligibility Do not possess HSC (may have attempted HSC) Method i) Interview ii) Employment record iii) Capacity to undertake study	Applied Science Arts (Fashion)	No fixed quota 37	

GIPPSLAND INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (VIC.)	P	Open	Method Mature students without formal qualifications encouraged. Selection based on individual merit. i) References ii) Interview iii) Extra-curricular interests and motivation	All courses Business and Social Sciences Education Engineering Applied Science Visual Arts	Not Specified	
GORDON INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (VIC.)	P	25+	No formal policy Method i) Interview ii) Evidence of relevant practical experience where no HSC	Not Specified	Not Specified	Gordon Institute to be absorbed by the new Deakin University in 1978.
GOULBURN COLLEGE OF ADVANCED EDUCATION (N.S.W.)	2 S.E.S. a) Mature age b) Provisional	21+	Method i) Evidence of other qualification since school ii) Capacity to undertake study iii) Interview	All courses Teacher/ Education (Primary) (Industrial Arts)	11 (7%) (1976)	As yet no students have entered under the provisional regulation.
KELVIN GROVE COLLEGE OF ADVANCED EDUCATION (QLD.)	2 P a) Mature Age b) Provisional Entry	a) 21+ b) Open	a) Eligibility Reduced final year secondary requirements (Senior) Method i) Academic performance ii) Interview iii) Medical report b) Method i) Other qualifications ii) Capacity to succeed at University	a) Teacher/ Education b) All courses	a) 41(8%) (1976) b) 47(9%) (1976)	Associate Diploma in Residential Care does not require T.E. score.
KINGSTON COLLEGE OF ADVANCED EDUCATION (S.A.)	2 P a) Mature Age b) Internally examined 12th year students	a) Not Specified	i) Interview ii) Tests (W.A.L.)	Teacher/ Education (Early Childhood)	29 (19%) (1976)	

TABLE 2.5 (Cont'd)

INSTITUTION	PROVISIONS	AGE	METHODS OF SELECTION	COURSES	NUMBER (%)	PERFORMANCE & OTHER INFORMATION
KURING-GAI COLLEGE OF ADVANCED EDUCATION (N.S.W.)	P Mature Age	Not fixed	Method i) Interview ii) Capacity to undertake studies iii) Employment experience iv) Other studies or qualifications v) Application form - including reasons for entry.	All courses Teacher/ Education Business/ Studies Securities/ Management Library/ Science	90 (30%) (1976) (Teaching) 150 (54%) (1976) (Business Studies)	Report being prepared on Mature Students in Business Studies School.
LINCOLN INSTITUTE (VIC.)	2 S.E.S. a) Scheme A b) Scheme B	a) 20 - 45	Eligibility a) No full attempt at HSC b) Failed HSC prior to 1972 Method (for both a & b) i) Aptitude test ii) Interview	All courses Medical Record/ Administration Occupational/ Therapy Orthoptics Physiotherapy Prosthetics and Orthotics Speech Science	10% quota	Too early to assess performance. Mature students seem to have particular difficulties re long practical sessions, family responsibilities. Add maturity to the student body.
MILPERRA COLLEGE OF ADVANCED EDUCATION (N.S.W.)	2 S.E.S. a) Special Admission b) Provisional Admission	a) <25 b) 25+	a) Eligibility Completed HSC (but eligible under ordinary admission) at least 12 months previously b) Eligibility i) No HSC ii) Appropriate alternative qualifications Method (Both a & b) i) Maturity ii) Academic background iii) Other qualifications/ employment background iv) Interview v) Other criteria deemed relevant.	Teacher/ Education	Not Specified	
MITCHELL COLLEGE OF ADVANCED EDUCATION (N.S.W.)	P Mature Age	21+	Eligibility No set qualifications Method i) Capacity for study ii) Employment history iii) Educational qualifications	All courses Teacher Education Business Studies General Studies	a) 15% approx. (Teaching) b) 25% approx. (Business Studies) c) 30% approx. (General Studies '76	39

MT. GRAVATT COLLEGE OF ADVANCED EDUCATION (QLD.)	N.P.	21+	No special provisions for mature age students	Teacher/ Education		
MT. LAWLEY COLLEGE OF ADVANCED EDUCATION (W.A.)	P a) Mature Age b) Aborigines	Not Specified	a) Eligibility Not qualified to enter on basis of final year secondary school Method i) Test (B40) (ACER) ii) Essay iii) Interview	Teacher Education (Primary)	20% mature age (1976)	Percentage given also includes those mature age students selected in the normal way.
MURRAY PARK COLLEGE OF ADVANCED EDUCATION (S.A.)	P	25+	Eligibility Not qualified to enter on basis of final year secondary school Method Test (ACER)	All courses Teacher Education Journalism General Studies	F.T.108(11%) P.T.352(70%) (1976)	Number given also includes those mature age students selected in the normal way.
NEPEAN COLLEGE OF ADVANCED EDUCATION (N.S.W.)	S.E.S. Mature Age	21+	Eligibility i) Acceptable level of education ii) Capacity for study Method i) Academic achievements ii) Motivation	a) Teacher Education b) Business Studies	a) (14%)(1977) b) F.T. (10%) P.T. (90%) (1977)	In the School of Business Studies majority of students are part time and mature age.
N.S.W. INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY	S.E.S. Adult Entry	25+	Eligibility Not qualified on basis of HSC, equivalent qualifications or accumulated Matriculation. Method No set regulations. Selection decided on an individual basis, considering, for example - i) Employment experience ii) Other qualifications iii) Recent studies	All faculties	Varies greatly from year to year.	'Tend to perform much more consistently than school leavers whilst perhaps not achieving the level of the best high school students...I consider them to be an excellent investment by any institution.' Adult students often requested to complete prerequisite subjects prior to entry.

TABLE 2.5 (Cont'd)

INSTITUTION	PROVISIONS	AGE	METHODS OF SELECTION	COURSES	NUMBER (%)	PERFORMANCE & OTHER INFORMATION
NEWCASTLE COLLEGE OF ADVANCED EDUCATION (N.S.W.)	2 P a) Mature Age b) Aboriginal Students	a) 21+ b) Open	a) Eligibility May or may not have normal entry requirements. Method i) IQ and Verbal ability tests ii) Interview b) Aboriginals enter on recommendation of Govt. authorities	All courses Art Teacher/ Education (Aboriginals have only entered Teacher Education)	a) 2% minimum quota 15% (1976) b) 4 (1%)(1976)	In 1976 many suitable mature age applicants rejected. Estimated 10% intake in 1977. Mature age students in 1975 performed far above the average and likely to in 1976. 'Would take more if it could.'
NORTH BRISBANE COLLEGE OF ADVANCED EDUCATION (QLD.)	P	21+	Eligibility i) May or may not have completed final year of secondary school ii) Other study or employment experience iii) 3 years' work experience or 21 years Method i) Interview ii) Awarded Notional T.E. score. Then compete with other students.	All courses Teacher Education Community Studies	No set quota	'We have a high regard for mature students which arises from their eagerness to succeed and their motivation to succeed. Most do.'
NORTHERN RIVERS COLLEGE OF ADVANCED EDUCATION (N.S.W.)	P	Mature	Eligibility No set regulations Method i) Interview to assess capacity for studies etc. ii) Employment history Granted provisional status until satisfactory completion of first semester	All courses Teacher Education Business Studies	No set quota 10%	Many applicants rejected. Performance above average. Better motivated. 'We have seen better results from the mature age entrant selected... because of lack of opportunity to complete secondary education than from the mature age entrant given a 'second chance'.' Some aborigines also admitted.

PRAHRAN COLLEGE OF ADVANCED EDUCATION (VIC.)	P	a) 23+ b) Open c) Open	Eligibility a) Must not have attempted HSC (Business) b) 2 years work experience c) 2 years experience in industry Method a) i) Interview ii) Employment history b) i) Interview ii) Work folio iii) English Expression test c) i) Interview ii) Essay iii) Comprehension test	a) Business b) Art and Design c) General Studies	a) 20(10%) b) 10(7%) c) 45(29%)	
PRESTON INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK) (VIC.)	P	a) <45 b) 20-50	Method (for both a & b) HSC not prerequisite - i) HSC or equivalent and/or ii) Work/life experience iii) Application form	a) Social Work (see last column) b) Welfare course (begins 1977)	a) 45(75%)(1977) b) not specified for a) & b) Quotas for each age group set by number of applicants in each age.	Numbers refer only to School of Social Work. Emphasis is on mature students as appropriate to particular course.
QUEENSLAND AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE	P Special Consideration	Not Specified	Method No specific provisions 'Special consideration' given to mature age applicants without normal entrance requirement. i) Interview ii) Employment record iii) Capacity for study Bridging courses provided for such students.	All courses Business/ Studies Rural Studies Environmental/ Studies Food Studies	No set quota	Bridging courses provided in Mathematics and Chemistry. '... applications from mature age applicants is rather limited. At all times the Admissions Committee is sympathetic towards these applications.'
QLD. INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY	P	Not Specified	Method Non-normal applications treated on an individual basis. Students may be granted provisional status on basis of - i) Maturity/capacity for study ii) Work experience	All courses Applied Science Built / Environment Business/ Studies Engineering Librarianship	Not Specified	Rarely are students accepted provisionally without partial success at 12th grade.

TABLE 2.5 (Cont'd)

INSTITUTION	PROVISIONS	AGE	METHODS OF SELECTION	COURSES	NUMBER (%)	PERFORMANCE & OTHER INFORMATION
RIVERINA COLLEGE OF ADVANCED EDUCATION (N.S.W.)	P	Not Specified	Eligibility May or may not possess HSC or equivalent Method i) Post secondary qualifications/ study ii) Interview and/or iii) Tests	All courses Agriculture Applied Science Business and Liberal Studies Teacher/ Education		
SALISBURY COLLEGE OF ADVANCED EDUCATION (S.A.)	P Mature Age	a) 25+ b) 21+	a) Eligibility Reduced HSC requirements Method i) Motivation ii) Work experience b) Method If not eligible under a) i) Interview ii) IQ test (B40) (ACER) iii) Reading/comprehension test (Form Y) (ACER) iv) Essay	Teacher/ Education (Primary) (Secondary) Recreation	40-60(10-15%) i.e. mature students under a) or b)	'When their results were compared with those who entered directly from school, it was found that the mature students had a higher percentage of credits and distinctions and ... only one failure has been recorded...'
SOUTH AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY	S.E.S. P a) Special Entry b) Reduced HSC	21+	a) Eligibility Do not possess normal entry requirements. Method Written submissions re capacity for study, experience, ability to cope with specific courses, other studies or qualifications. Maybe granted full or provisional enrolment. b) Other students are admitted under reduced HSC requirements for adults	All courses (under graduate)	295 (1976)	295 (40% of Special Entry applicants) were enrolled.

STURT COLLEGE OF ADVANCED EDUCATION (S.A.)	P	a) 20+ b) 21+	Eligibility (both a & b) May or may not have completed final year secondary school Method i) ACER speed and accuracy test ii) ACER advanced AL test iii) ACER comprehension/reading test (Form Y) iv) Phillips occupational preference test	a) Health (Nursing) (Speech Pathology) b) Teacher Education (Primary) (Secondary)	5% (Nursing) (1976) 30 (33%) (Speech Pathology) (1976) (8%)(Teaching) (1976)	Most mature age students are part time.
SWINBURNE COLLEGE OF TECHNOLOGY (VIC.)	P	20+	Eligibility Do not fulfil normal entry requirements Method Applied Science i) Interview ii) Employment experience Art i) Interview ii) Aptitude tests Arts i) Post secondary study/or ii) Pursuits demanding written & oral skills Business i) Interview ii) Aptitude tests iii) Employment experience Engineering Interview (capacity for further studies)	All courses Applied Science Art Arts Business Engineering		
TASMANIAN COLLEGE OF ADVANCED EDUCATION	P	Mature	No special provisions. Students without prerequisites granted provisional enrolment. All applicants are interviewed.	All courses Administration Science and Technology Teacher/ Education Environmental/ Design Music	606 (55%) (1976) (not necessarily provisional entrants)	Teacher Education actively recruits mature students without normal prerequisites - approx. 10% of each intake.
TORRENS COLLEGE OF ADVANCED EDUCATION (S.A.)	P	21+	Method i) Aptitude test (ASAT for Teacher Education applicants and College tests for others) ii) Interview	All courses Art Music Design Teacher/ Education	No set quota. Approx. 10% of intake mature age	Some cases considered on individual basis e.g. aboriginal students.

TABLE 2.5 (Cont'd)

INSTITUTION	PROVISIONS	AGE	METHODS OF SELECTION	COURSES	NUMBER (%)	PERFORMANCE & OTHER INFORMATION
TOWNSVILLE COLLEGE OF ADVANCED EDUCATION (QLD.)	P	21+	Eligibility Need not possess HSC Method Aptitude tests (TEEP)	All courses Teacher/ Education (Primary) Community/ Welfare Commerical/ Studies	Quota of 10% (Not always filled)	'It is generally felt that there is a greater commitment on the part of the mature age entrant.'
WARRNAMBOOL INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED EDUCATION (VIC.)	S.E.S. Special Entry	21+	Eligibility Must not have attempted HSC or equivalent Method i) Written test ii) Employment background iii) Motivation iv) Aptitude for studies in proposed course	All courses Applied Science Fine Art Business Engineering Social Science Teacher/ Education	No set quota approx. 5% - 10% of intake	
WESTERN AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (W.A.)	P (3 schemes) a) Reduced T.A.E. requirement b) Mature Age Test c) English Dept. provision	21+	a) Reduced final year secondary school (TAE) requirement weighted to be competitive with school leavers. b) W.A.I.T. Mature Age testing i) Aptitude test (ACER B58) ii) Essay iii) One TAE subject other than English c) English Department chooses unqualified mature age students on basis of a writing sample Students qualifying under a) & b) must also satisfy course prerequisities or are granted provisional enrolment.	All courses Applied Science Art & Design Business & Admin. Engineering Surveying Health Science Mining and Mineral Tech. Social Sciences Teacher/ Education	138 (3%) qualified under these provisions	

DARLING DOWNS INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED EDUCATION (QLD.)	P	23+	Eligibility Some secondary education Method i) Complete a questionnaire ii) Interview iii) May be required to sit for an examination iv) Evidence of experience relevant to course. Students apply through the Qld. Admissions Centre and if possible granted a notional Tertiary Entrance score. Initially students granted provisional status.	All courses Applied Science Arts Business Studies Education Engineering Resource/ Materials	Up to 20% in each course may be provisional entrants. Approx. 6% mature age (1977)	Admission policies are currently being revised.
FOOTSCRAY INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (VIC.)	P	21+	Eligibility Under any of the following: i) Over 21+ ii) From a Western suburban school iii) Work experience iv) Compensatory qualifications Method Interview	All courses Business Studies Secretarial Practice Catering & Hotel Management Engineering Applied Science Arts (Urban Studies) Physical Educ. Recreational Leadership	No set quota	Eligibility provisions may vary from course to course.

TABLE 2.6 — Teachers Colleges: Mature Age Students

AQUINAS COLLEGE SCV (VIC.)	P	25+	i) Aptitude test ii) English test iii) Interview	Primary Teaching	5%	
ARMIDALE TEACHERS COLLEGE CAE (N.S.W.)	P	Not Specified	Eligibility No minimum requirement: Method i) Interview ii) Essay	Teacher Education	35(12%)(1976)	Number of mature age students is increasing. Study of performance currently being undertaken.
BRISBANE KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS COLLEGE (QLD.)	P (non-standard applicants)	Not Specified	Cases considered on individual merit. No set regulations. Many non-standard applicants in fact allocated a Tertiary Entrance score.	a) Early Childhood teaching	a) 30 places reserved (15%) b) 15 places reserved (75%)	

TABLE 2.6 (Cont'd)

INSTITUTION	PROVISIONS	AGE	METHODS OF SELECTION	COURSES	NUMBER (%)	PERFORMANCE & OTHER INFORMATION
BURWOOD SCV (VIC.)	P	25+	Eligibility No minimum requirement Method i) Demonstrate range of understanding and interests including other study ii) Entry tests iii) Essay iv) Interview	Teacher Education		Special Entry Scheme yet to be implemented. Mature age students appear to be performing better than normal entrants.
CATHOLIC COLLEGE OF EDUCATION (N.S.W.)	P Provisional	25+	i) Demonstrate ability to undertake studies ii) Interview	Teacher Education	Quota of 20% (1975)	Perform well and 'bring a maturity, dedication and strong motivation that has a very good effect on the general student body.'
CATHOLIC TEACHERS COLLEGE (N.S.W.)	2 S.E.S. a) Mature Age b) Provisional	25+	i) Assessment of experience and motivation ii) References iii) Interview	Teacher Education (Infants) (Primary) (Junior (Secondary)	32(11%)(1976)	For those seeking entry to the Junior Secondary course evidence is also required of academic ability and background knowledge of subjects that they will be teaching.
CHRIST COLLEGE S.C.V. (VIC.)	2 S.E.S. a) Special Entry b) Mature Age	a) Not Specified b) 23+	a) Eligibility Does not possess formal entry requirements. Method Evidence of motivation and capacity for study & teaching, evidence of work experience etc. b) Eligibility Must have completed 5 years secondary education.	Teacher Education		

CLAREMONT TEACHERS COLLEGE C.A.E. (W.A.)	2 P a) Mature age matriculation. b) Mature Age testing	21 - 45	a) Eligibility Reduced matriculation requirement (including English) Method Awarded a score based on subject results and then compete with normal applicants b) Eligibility Not specified. Method i) General abilities test ii) Essay iii) Interview	Teacher Education	Quota of approx. 20% 30 (10%) awarded places in 1976	Perform better in practical subjects than in academic studies. Attrition rate higher than that of normal students, particularly amongst married women with children.
COBURG S.C.V. (VIC.)	2 P a) Special Entry b) Aboriginal students	a) 25+ b) Open	Eligibility Do not possess normal entry requirements Method i) Interview ii) Aptitude test (for Aboriginal students)	Teacher Education (Primary) (Early Childhood) (Youth Work) (Welfare Administration)	a) Quota of 10% b) 7 students (1976)	
FRANKSTON S.C.V. (VIC.)	2 P a) Mature age b) Disadvantaged	a) 25+ b) 18+	Eligibility a) Must not possess full HSC b) Shortened or impeded secondary education for family, social or financial reasons Method i) Aptitude test ii) Interview (Same selection procedure proposed for both schemes)	Teacher Education (Early Childhood) (Primary)	Quota of 15% i.e. approx. 15 students (1977)	Scheme is to be implemented in 1977.
GEELONG S.C.V. (VIC.)	P	23+	Eligibility Must not have made full attempt at HSC Method i) Aptitude test (ASAT) (ACER) ii) Literacy test iii) Interview	Teacher Education (Primary)	10 (5%) (1976)	Scheme was introduced in 1976. To date students performing 'above average'.

TABLE 2.6 (Cont'd)

INSTITUTION	PROVISIONS	AGE	METHODS OF SELECTION	COURSES	NUMBER (%)	PERFORMANCE & OTHER INFORMATION
GOOD SAMARITAN TEACHERS COLLEGE (N.S.W.)	P		Eligibility Need not possess HSC qualification Method i) Level of education ii) Work experience iii) Motivation for teaching iv) Personality suitability v) References vi) Interview	Teacher Education (Primary)	(Approx. 30%) (1976)	
GRAYLANDS TEACHERS COLLEGE (W.A.)	P	21+	Eligibility Must not have been full time student in the preceding year Method i) IQ (B40) (ACER) ii) Essay iii) Interview	Teacher Education (Primary)	20-25 (15%)	Average age of entrants is 25-27 years.
THE GUILD TEACHERS COLLEGE (N.S.W.)	2 S.E.S. a) Mature Age b) Aboriginal Assistance Scheme	a) 21+	Eligibility HSC at acceptable level OR Adult matriculation status may be granted by the College Council Method i) Aptitude tests ii) Interview iii) References (personal & employment)	Teacher Education (Primary)	a) 20%	The College actively seeks mature age students.
INSTITUTE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT (VIC.) S.C.V.	S.E.S. Special Entry	25+	Method i) Visit to a pre-school ii) Medical clearance iii) Comprehension test iv) Written statement of reason for doing the course v) Attendance at a group meeting vi) Interview	Teacher Education (Early Childhood)	Maximum of 10%	Stringent pre-selection measures to sort out the most serious applicants. 'It is interesting to note that the 160 apparently serious and eligible enquiries since March have been reduced to 36 by this method and this group is well informed and very interested.'
McAULEY COLLEGE OF TEACHER EDUCATION (QLD.)	P	Open	Eligibility May or may not have Tertiary Entrance score Method i) School results (internally assessed) ii) References iii) Interview	Teacher Education	40	

MELBOURNE S.C.V. (VIC.)	S.E.S. Special Entry	Open	Eligibility Must not possess normal entry requirements or have failed HSC in the preceding year Method Varies according to course preference i) Interview ii) Essay (in some courses) iii) Pre-selection questionnaire (in some courses) iv) Aptitude test (ASAT) (ACER) (Business studies) v) Folio of work (Arts & Crafts) or audition (Drama & Music)	Teacher Education (Primary) (Secondary)	Quota 5% minimum 10% maximum	Scheme began in 1975. In 1976 there was a shortage of suitable special entry applicants in Science and Art and Crafts areas of B.Ed. Study of performance of special entry students reports - i) Dip. in Primary Teaching students performed extremely well ii) Students in secondary courses generally did not perform as satisfactorily as those in primary course - greater care needs to be taken with selection.
NURSERY SCHOOL TEACHERS COLLEGE C.A.E. (VIC.)	P	24+	Method i) Aptitude test (ASAT) (ACER) ii) Vocational suitability test iii) Interview	Teacher Education	33% (1976)	Mature age students perform better and have a lower drop-out rate than normal entrants.
RUSDEN S.C.V. (VIC.)	N.P.					An investigation has taken place into Introduction of a Special Entry Scheme.
TOORAK S.C.V. (VIC.)	S.E.S. Special Entry	25+	Eligibility Must not have HSC or equivalent Method i) Aptitude test (ASAT) (ACER) ii) Numeracy test iii) English Comprehension test iv) Interview	Teacher Education (Primary) (B.Ed.)	Maximum of 15%	This scheme has been in operation since 1974.
THE WESTERN AUST. SECONDARY TEACHERS COLLEGE (W.A.)	S.E.S. Mature Age	21+	Eligibility Must not have completed secondary school Method i) IQ test (B40) (ACER) ii) Essay iii) Interview	Teacher Education (Secondary) Assoc. Dip. of Recreation Assoc. Dip. in Library Media	20 (6%) (Secondary) 20 (50%) (Assoc. Dip. in Recreation) (1976)	'Willing and enthusiastic and added a touch of maturity to the student body'. Number of applicants each year (since 1973) 'could be drying up.'
WOLLONGONG INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION (N.S.W.)	N.P.					

TABLE 2.7 — Single Purpose Colleges: Mature Age Students

INSTITUTION	PROVISIONS	AGE	METHODS OF SELECTION	COURSES	NUMBER (%)	PERFORMANCE & OTHER INFORMATION
BURNLEY HORTICULTURAL COLLEGE (VIC.)	P	Not Specified	Eligibility Minimum qualification 'completion of secondary education.' In fact places allocated roughly on basis of number of applicants from these groups – i) Those who completed 5th form ii) Those who completed 6th form iii) Those with other qualifications or studies In fact minimum requirement sometimes waived if candidate shows strengths in other areas. Method (All applicants) i) Interview (standardised schedule) ii) Work references (if relevant)	Horticultural Science		
COLLEGE OF NURSING (QUEENSLAND BRANCH)	P	Mature	Eligibility Primary nursing training and some practical experience. For those without matriculation or equivalent – Method English comprehension and expression test (ETP)	Nursing Admin. Nursing/ Education Nursing & Unit/ Management	All students are mature age 41 (80%) were selected on English paper (1975)	
COLLEGE OF NURSING (VICTORIAN BRANCH)	2 P	Mature Mature	Eligibility a) Primary nursing training and some specified practical experience. For those without HSC or equivalent – Method i) English entrance paper (ETP) ii) Reading and study program in the year prior to admission iii) Assignment or 2 hour paper on ii b) Eligibility Does not possess normal entrance requirement (HSC) i) Psychological test ii) Interview iii) References iv) Education entrance paper (ETP) v) Medical test	a) Nursing Admin. Nursing Education Community Health Hospital & Unit Management b) Primary Nursing course	a) 75% of all entrants b) Very few	Study program is designed to help mature students prepare themselves for study.

DOOKIE AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE (VIC.)	P	Open	No specific provisions. However students with greater motivation and commitment may score higher than younger students with better academic qualifications Method i) Academic record ii) Employment history iii) School/work reports iv) Interview v) Aptitude tests	Agriculture	4(6%) over 21 years of age (1976)	Students with poor academic backgrounds may be required to do some preliminary units. 'Our favourable experience with mature age students has resulted in such weightings of the various criteria for selection that few, who apply, have been rejected.'
LONGERENONG AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE (VIC.)	P	Open	No set minimum academic requirement. Preference given to applicants with agricultural experience. Emphasis on student demonstrating maturity and ability. Method i) Interview ii) References iii) Medical report iv) Secondary education level	Agriculture	4 (1976)	'In order to operate the scheme we have reviewed our course to allow for bridging programmes and exemptions in the first year of our course.'
MURESK AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE (W.A.)	P	Not Specified	Eligibility i) Do not possess normal entry requirement (TAE) ii) 1 year's practical experience (all students) Method Interview (to assess ability and maturity). Initially granted provisional enrolment.	Agriculture	No set quota (5% - 10%)	
N.S.W. STATE CONSERVATORIUM OF MUSIC	S.E.S. Adult Entrance	23+	If not normal entry requirement - i) Standard of education acceptable to Board of Studies ii) Evidence of capacity for particular course Initially granted provisional enrolment	Music Education		
ORANGE AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE (N.S.W.)	P	Mature	If does not possess HSC or equivalent - Method i) Extensive rural experience ii) Pre-entry examination Initially granted provisional enrolment.	Farm Management	4 (4%)(1976)	'We find they (mature students) more motivated and thus experience fewer problems with the course.'

TABLE 2.7 (Cont'd)

INSTITUTION	PROVISIONS	AGE	METHODS OF SELECTION	COURSES	NUMBER (%)	PERFORMANCE & OTHER INFORMATION
ROSEWORTHY AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE (S.A.)	S.E.S. Mature Age	21+	Eligibility Must not have completed secondary school. Method (For all applicants) i) Academic record ii) School or employer's reports iii) Interview	Agriculture	No set quota 5 (1976)	'An older person, despite a poor academic record some years in the past, would not necessarily be disadvantaged compared with younger students with better records'. 'In 1976, the Assoc. Diploma in Farming was introduced for persons with farming backgrounds ... The College expects that a significant number (perhaps over 50%) ... will be mature age.'
SCHOOL OF MEDICAL RECORD ADMINISTRATION (N.S.W.)	N.P.		Mature age students must meet normal entry requirements.			
SYDNEY COLLEGE OF THE ARTS (N.S.W.)	P	25+	Eligibility No stated minimum requirement Method i) Interview ii) Other experience.	Design	8% (1976)	
VICTORIAN COLLEGE OF THE ARTS	P	Open	'Students are selected principally on demonstrated ability and potential in their chosen field of fine or performing arts.' Students in Drama course must be over 20.	Drama Art Music		'We have found that students in the more mature age group experience, to a higher degree, financial difficulties ... in music and drama this causes problems of absenteeism and unpunctuality.'
VICTORIAN COLLEGE OF PHARMACY	N.P.		'The Selection Committee does, of course, take into account any claims for special consideration.'			
VICTORIAN SCHOOL OF FORESTRY	N.P.			[illegible] 50		

CHAPTER 3

The Academic Performance of Mature Age Students: a Review of the General Literature.

Elena G. Eaton

3.1 *Introduction*

The following review of the academic performance of mature age students is based on published studies carried out in Canada, the United States of America, the United Kingdom and Australia. While the more recent findings are highlighted, particularly those dealing with university performance, several early studies and others which investigated the success of mature age students in several types of tertiary institutions (e.g. community colleges, polytechnics, business and teachers' colleges) are also mentioned.

It must be remembered that the term "mature age students" is a fairly loose one since there is a marked lack of consensus among the studies about the definition of mature aged students. For example, some researchers defined them by a minimum age, which could range anywhere from 21 to 35 years, others identified mature age students in terms of the number of years they had been absent from the formal education process, which again varied from one study to another; and a small number of studies dealt with unqualified applicants, most of whom were over 25 (e.g. Perkins, 1971; Barrett, 1976 and Wilson & Lapinski, 1978).

More will be said about the problems arising from differences in methods of defining and selecting mature age students in the following chapter.

3.2 *The Performance of Veterans*

Following the Second World War and again after the Vietnam War, returned service men made up the first major influx of adult students into tertiary courses, and there are numerous studies investigating the academic performance of these veterans. Their academic superiority, despite an absence from the formal education process and, in many cases, below average performance at high school, has been confirmed in studies both in Australia, (Sanders 1961), and in the United States of America (Atkinson, 1946; Cozan, 1950; Frederikson & Schrader, 1950; Garmezy & Crose, 1948; Holmes, 1969; Hunt, 1972; Johnson, 1970; Reed & Murphy, 1975; Smith, 1971). It should be remembered that veterans were perhaps atypical mature age students since many had undergone some training in science and/or mathematics in the armed forces.

3.3 *The Learning Ability of Older People*

Perhaps a word should be said at this point on the question of whether adult students have a lower learning ability than younger students since it is common folklore that learning ability reaches a peak at about 25 years and after this age it continues to decline at an increasing rate. This was a research topic of considerable interest in the 1920s and 1930s and two studies in particular, Thorndike (1928) and Sorenson (1930), are now regarded as classics.

Thorndike and his associates carried out a series of well planned experiments and concluded that a decline in learning ability does occur. However, he stated that age in itself is a minor factor in either success or failure, and that capacity, interest, energy and time are the essentials in learning. Sorenson provided evidence to show that an observed decline in learning ability was more a function of absence from learning than of age itself. He also was careful to qualify his findings as to the size of the effect of age:

> "One may tentatively conclude that at least up to the ages of fifty there is no decline in learning ability with age for those who are actively engaged in study; but probably there is a slight disability, which can be overcome by the resumption of study, for those who have not been engaged in vigorous learning for a period of several or more years" (p.459).

These two studies, and many of the others, have been discussed in a review of the age factor in adult education by McLeish (1962). His analysis leads to the same conclusion as that quoted from Thorndike and Sorenson, namely that adult students are not disadvantaged in learning because of their age. "There is no mystical handicap which fetters adult education because of the age of students" McLeish, *ibid*, (p.42).

There is evidence of an increasing range of individual differences in learning abilities up to about the 50 year age level (Knox, 1977, p.417).

> "It appears that the most intellectually able people increase their learning ability more rapidly during childhood and adolescence, reach a higher plateau later in adulthood, and then continue to increase gradually or maintain learning ability during adulthood. By contrast the least intellectually able people increase learning ability more slowly, reach a plateau earlier, and decline more rapidly."

It seems clear is that there is no basis for arguing against the entry of mature age students into higher education on the grounds that they will benefit less than younger students because their learning ability has declined.

3.4 *Some early studies of the performance of mature age students*

The influential New Zealand report on the university performance of 3,466 candidates (Thomas, Beeby & Oram, 1939) stated that:

> "... students who allow one or more years to elapse between passing the University Entrance Examination and Matriculation have a better chance of finishing a degree than those who go straight to the University after passing the U.E. Examination" (p.112).

A study on the prediction of academic success at the Queen's University, Belfast, supported this conclusion (Foster, cited by Schonell, 1963). Harris

(1940) pointed out in his summary of the literature of factors affecting college grades that, while findings indicated that younger students, particularly those 17 years of age and under, are superior to older students in terms of academic performance most studies did not take intelligence into account:

> "In the one case where intelligence was controlled by matching, no difference in the high and low age groups were found . . . In another it was found that with groups equated for Regent's average both the under age and over age students did better than the middle group . . . In three studies no relation was found between age and grades" (p.128).

Until fairly recently most studies dealing with the relation between age and academic success have been based almost exclusively on samples of entrants straight from school, with students being divided into three age groups: "younger", 16 and 17 years of age; "middle", 18 and 19 years; and "older", 20 years and over (Philp & Cullen, 1955; Flecker, 1959; Schonell, Roe & Meddleton, 1962; Barnett, Holder & Lewis, 1968; Kapur, 1972). Not only have the numbers in the "older" category tended to be small, they have included many students who took longer to qualify and who may be academically weaker than their younger counterparts. This should be borne in mind when considering the findings of these abovementioned studies since statements like "under 20s do better than over 20s" (Kapur, 1972) and "the graduate rate in minimum time for each group decreases as the age increases" (Schonell, 1963) have perhaps tended to be more memorable than the qualifications which accompany them.

Philp and Cullen for instance found evidence to suggest that while younger students are more successful than older entrants, those 24 years and over tend to do better than the 18 and 19 year old group. Sanders's (1961) study of the 1947 intake at the University of Western Australia, which included a significant proportion of ex-servicemen on average 5½ years older than normal entrants, showed that the university success rate falls as age entry rises until the age of 20 or 21, then from about 22 onwards the success rate begins to rise again. This conclusion is in keeping with the bulk of the evidence, both early and recent.

3.5 *Science versus Arts courses*

One factor which may partially explain the success of mature age students is their tendency to select Social Science and Arts courses. This is in keeping with findings of Sanders (1961), Schonell (1963), Perkins (1971), Lunneborg, Olch & de Wolf (1974) and Walker (1975), all of whom attribute the academic success of mature age students in part of their selection of non-science subjects. Indeed most of the samples studied showed a concentration of mature age students in Arts type courses with relatively few taking Science subjects, perhaps supporting the belief that a break in schooling leads to a loss in scientific and mathematical skills. Whereas verbal aptitude tends to increase with age and experience, making maturity a positive predictor of success in the study of Arts and Social Sciences, it appears from the limited evidence available that mathematical and scientific skills may suffer as a result of a break in study, though only temporarily (Sanders, 1961; Fagin, 1971; Sharon, 1971). For those people whose skills

have deteriorated through disuse, "refresher" courses prior to entry should be more widely available so that mature age students can enter a wider range of courses.

3.6 *The usefulness of traditional predictors of performance*

One of the most important factors to emerge from a study of the literature is the inappropriateness of applying traditional admission criteria to the selection of mature age students in certain circumstances. When researchers have taken such predictive criteria as high school Grade Point Averages (GPA) or standardized admission tests into account, the correlations with university GPA were significantly lower for mature age entrants than for students straight from school (Winslow, 1968; Ryan, 1969; Groenke, 1969; Hull, 1970; Ice, 1971; Perkins, 1971; Pitcher, 1973; Walker, 1975; Reed & Murphy, 1975; Van Helden, 1975). For instance, in a study of the first year intake of mature age students who lacked the regular academic requirements at the University of Lethbridge, in Canada, Perkins (1971) found that although their mean score was significantly lower on the College Qualification Test compared to that of normal entrants, they earned a significantly higher accumulative GPA. It would appear that students who have been away from formal education for an extended period may be ill-equipped or unprepared to perform well on standardized admission tests.

Walker's study of the performance of mature age students at the University of Warwick showed that those who failed to satisfy the General Entrance Requirements (GER) (123 of the 231 mature age students in the sample) obtained significantly better degree results than the total student population, although the degree results of those mature age students who did satisfy the GER did not differ significantly from this norm. Walker attributed this somewhat surprising result to the fact that the latter group was on average younger:

> ". . . they may not be mature in the spirit of the word, but may simply be defined thus by taking longer than normal to obtain the entrance qualifications" (p.12).

He pointed out also that mature students aged between 21 and 25 may not have spent a long enough period away from formal study to test their motivation as fully as older students.

The samples studied are too small for generalizations to be made but they contribute to the growing speculation about the capacity of high school records or any general achievement test to predict adequately the performance of mature age students in university studies, particularly in Arts and Social Science subjects. Many tertiary institutions throughout the world are now providing special entry schemes for older students partly in recognition of this problem (see chapter 2).

3.7 *Drop-out and failure rates*

Recent studies which take drop-out and failure rates into account further support the admission of mature age students. In a study of 254 mature age students (i.e., those who had a break of two or more years between leaving school and re-entering full-time education) at the University of Aberdeen it was found that they had approximately the same

failure-and-withdrawal rate as students straight from school (Nisbet & Welsh, 1972). Walker's (1975) analysis of student performance was based on degree classification and wastage. The average score for the degree classification of all mature students was 55.6, significantly higher than the average mean of 50 for the total student population, and no significant difference was found in the drop-out and failure rates of mature age and normal entrants. Van Helden's (1975) retrospective study of student performance in relation to age found that the percentages of students who discontinued with at least one failure were 64 per cent for the under 22 age group, 56 per cent for students 22-25, and 41 per cent for those over 26 years of age. The percentage of students gaining a degree were 23 per cent, 16 per cent and 29 per cent respectively. (The figures for the 22-25 and 26+ age groups may be depressed because the number of full-time students in these categories, respectively 10 per cent and 11 per cent, is much lower than the 41 per cent for the youngest group). As with Walker's study, the students 26 years of age and older achieved outstanding results.

3.8 *Reasons proposed for the good performance of mature age students*

It would seem then that "life experience" has academic value, specifically the Arts and Social Sciences. The reasons advanced by researchers to account for the success of the mature age student centre on two ideas, namely higher motivation and greater maturity:

> ". . . maturity and motivation compensate for their lack of past formal educational experience, as far as the study of Arts and Humanities is concerned. The success of 'mature' students at the University of Lethbridge would tend to support the views of Douglas (1931), Travers (1949) and Cook (1961, 1962). It seems that given a minimum native ability or intelligence, the crucial factor for success at university is motivation and not necessarily prior experience in certain subjects particularly in Arts and Humanities courses" (Perkins, 1971, p.111).

Walker (1975) goes into this idea of motivation somewhat more thoroughly:

> ". . . mature students will probably have spent a period in employment during which weak motivation may not have survived. Taking up full-time study as a mature student can also involve considerable sacrifice and personal difficulties" (p.10).

This is illustrated in the study by Nisbet and Welsh (1972) in which it was found that 70 per cent of the mature-age students suffered a drop in income, with 40 per cent experiencing financial difficulties. Forty-two per cent said they "had experienced strain in their domestic life as a result of taking up full-time study", and the figure was inflated to 58 per cent among those married. Obviously older students face a variety of problems which tend to be different in kind, if not in magnitude, from those of entrants straight from school (Chapter 6 looks at this aspect in some detail). It is clear that, given their success, a degree of self-selection operates on the part of mature age students whose decision to take up tertiary studies cannot, as a rule, be lightly made.

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CHAPTER 4

Academic Performance of Mature Age Students: Recent Research in Australia

Elena G. Eaton and Leo. H. T. West

4.1 *Introduction*

Since the early seventies, an increasing number of Australian tertiary institutions have introduced special entry schemes for mature age students. La Trobe University, in 1972, was probably the first to initiate special provisions for unmatriculated mature age entrants, and in the short time since then the number of such schemes has mushroomed. Although the methods of selection vary widely (see Chapter 2), most institutions are placing less reliance on traditional selection criteria and some have abandoned them altogether.

This approach is consistent with the research findings reviewed in Chapter 3 and has certainly been encouraged by the results of studies undertaken within the institutions themselves. Although institutions were not specifically asked about performance in the survey of mature age student enrolment (Chapter 2), many respondents spoke favourably about the progress of their mature age intakes; there were also a number of comments that mature age students had a positive influence on class climate.

Fifteen studies and reports from various types of tertiary institutions, almost all of which are unpublished, form the basis of this review of recent Australian research into the academic performance of mature age students.

One of the studies dealt with mature age students selected in the same way as entrants straight from school (Kings & Dickins, 1976); three others (Anderson, 1973; Barrett, 1976; Joseph, 1977) looked at the performance of mature age students admitted on the basis of their results on a limited HSC programme. The rest are concerned with mature age students who entered under special schemes and who, for the most part, lacked formal qualifications.

Because many of these studies are not published, detailed summaries of them are given at the end of this chapter (Table 4.2).

4.2 *Details of recent studies of performance in Australia*

Before examining the findings, some cautionary comments need to be made about interpreting and generalizing from these studies. It is inevitable that one would want to compare the performance of mature age or special entry students with that of "normal" entrants (N-types). However, there are problems in making inferences from such comparisons. In the first place,

the two groups are selected differently. Mature age entrants are more likely to be self-selected. In addition, the selection criteria used are different. Thus any observed difference in their performance may be a function of the specific selection procedure used, rather than of different performance characteristics of mature age and normal age entrants. Secondly, mature age students are more likely to attend part-time than N-type students. Again, any observed difference in their performance may be a function of their different attendance patterns. There is considerable evidence that part-time students have a higher drop out rate, though not lower academic ability, than full-time students (Butterfield & Kane, 1969).

The studies reviewed are decision-oriented, conducted to aid decision-making, and while the above comments are unimportant in that context, they are important if we intend to make inferences about the performance of mature age students *per se* and if we intend to generalize from the results.

The following table (Table 4.1) gives some indication of the performance of mature age students generally. It is based on 31 mature age student cohorts reported by seven institutions (some institutions report pass rates for each intake in each year, e.g. La Trobe University). Pass rates are calculated as the number of passes in units/subjects as a percentage of the total number of units/subjects undertaken.

Table 4.1

Pass Rates for 31 Cohorts of Mature Age Students (Units/Subjects) Reported by Seven Institutions

	Percentage of units/subjects passed by mature age students			
	100-90	89-80	79-70	70
No. of Cohorts	17	7	6	1

By any criteria these results would be considered excellent.

4.3 *Studies comparing the performance of mature age students with that of N-type students*

A number of studies make comparisons between the performance of mature age students and that of either a randomly selected group of normally admitted students or the total student population. At the University of Western Australia, where mature age entrants are required to have completed a limited HSC programme, Anderson (1973) reported that they have about the same pass rate, fewer failures and more drop-outs than normal age entrants with full HSC. A similar pattern was found at the James Cook University of Northern Queensland in 1977, although in this case mature age students were admitted on the basis of a personal interview rather than on formal qualifications.

Macquarie University also requires mature age students first to

complete a limited HSC course, but then gives them preference over normal age entrants. The Macquarie study (Joseph, 1977) compared the performance of mature age students with that of the total intake for both part-time and full-time students. Mature age students performed better in both categories and their drop-out rates were considerably lower. In view of the fact that more mature age students tend to enrol part-time than normal age entrants, it is unfortunate that only one other study (Huggan, 1976) controlled for type of enrolment.

The third study which looked at the performance of mature age students with part HSC (Barrett, 1976), found that they had a pass rate of 73 per cent, which compared very favourably with that of the normally admitted intake.

When the study at Rusden State College was undertaken (Kings & Dickins, 1976), there were no special mature age entry provisions. Older applicants competed with students straight from school on the basis of their HSC results. The analysis was based on the results of students completing the second, third and fourth years of a course at Rusden in 1976. Students aged 21 and over at time of entry performed better than younger students, and those aged 25 and over did significantly better than the 21 to 24 age group.

Four studies made comparisons between normal type entrants and mature age students whose qualifications for entry were very varied. At Kuring-gai CAE (Birkett *et al.*, 1977), all entrants who do not possess *current* HSC are defined as mature age students. Thus the mature age group included people with previous HSC, professional or technical qualifications and even completed or part-completed degrees. Moreover, approximately 18 per cent of the mature age group were less than 21 years of age. They were reported to have performed better than the entrants straight from school, although their drop-out rate was higher (about 30 per cent compared to 22 per cent for the current HSC group). However, 84 per cent of the mature age cohort were studying part-time compared to 32 per cent of the entrants straight from school.

In the study undertaken at Salisbury CAE (Childs, 1974), the mature age cohort included students with full HSC, those who satisfied a reduced HSC requirement and special entry students with no academic qualifications at all. All were at least 25 years of age. The performance of the mature age students was found to be markedly superior to that of a matched group of regular students. An earlier study of the Mature Age Entry Programme produced similar findings. Mature age students gained double the percentage of passes at credit or higher level, and their failure rate was one-fifth of that of the rest of the College population. Although the number of mature age students who dropped-out was not given, Childs indicated that the mature age students had a lower withdrawal rate than the normal-type entrants.

A study of various types of entrants to the Business and Accounting Diploma/Degree course was made at the Caulfield Institute of Technology (Huggan, 1976). It included a comparison between the performance of the Special Entry intake, aged 24 and over, with that of students with full HSC. The mature age group was comprised of students with part HSC and a

smaller number who had no formal schooling beyond Form Five (Year 11). Performance was analysed according to type of enrolment but the number in the full-time Special Entry cohort was considered too small for their performance to be analysed separately. The part-time Special Entry intake had a higher pass rate than the part-time students with full HSC, and achieved a considerably higher proportion of graded passes (i.e. credit or better). The drop-out rates were about the same for both groups. Huggan concluded that "If the statistics for the 1976 intake can be shown to be typical for those of other years, then there should be no concern over the admission of the mature age unqualified (academically) type . . ." (p.3).

A study of the performance of mature age Special Entry students at the Melbourne State College (Elsworth, 1976) included a few students with full HSC and many who had some HSC subjects. While no formal comparison was made with the regularly admitted students, Elsworth concluded that the performance of the Special Entry cohort supported the continuation and possibly the extension of this scheme.

The universities, too, have been interested in the performance of mature age students, without matriculation, who have been admitted under special entry schemes.

Barrett (1976) at the University of New South Wales examined the performance of mature age unmatriculated students in the 1975 intake in their first and second years and the 1976 intake in their first year. As a comparison group she included a randomly selected sample of mature age students with reduced HSC. She concluded that mature age students, however admitted, continue to perform at a high level and the results of those with no matriculation qualifications fully justify the continuation of the Special Admissions Scheme.

Rogers (1976) examined the performance of four intakes of Early Leavers at La Trobe and found that they received a higher average grade, had a lower failure rate and about the same attrition rate as other students.

Similar results were obtained in studies at Monash (Smurthwaite *et al.*, 1977), Flinders (Buchan, 1976), Woolongong (Turnbull, 1976) and Adelaide (Wesley Smith, 1976). In each case the pass rate (i.e. percentage of subjects passed) was of the order of 90 per cent.

The Newcastle study (Smith & Collins, 1976) evaluated the success of the recently introduced Open Foundation Course which is offered to people, regardless of background, who wish to enter the University of Newcastle. Places are offered to those who complete the year-long course and who are recommended as likely to succeed at university studies. Mature age students entering in this way performed better than N-type entrants.

4.4 *The performance of mature age students — a summary*

The mature age students studied in the research described in this chapter are not a homogeneous group. Some are unqualified students admitted under special schemes, some are partly qualified, some are fully qualified. Nonetheless, whatever their qualifications for entry, their performance can be described in one word: successful. As a body they tend to gain good marks, have excellent pass rates and acceptable attrition rates.

In so far as comparisons can be made with normal students they perform as well, if not better.

It does not follow that mature age students will perform better than students straight from school who have similar intelligence and motivation, and across all courses, etc.; nor that all mature age students will perform well. The current "crop" of mature age students in Australia may be a select group.

However, when the findings from the recent Australian studies (reviewed in this chapter) are added to the similar findings made in other countries and in earlier studies (reviewed in Chapter 3), the force of the conclusions is considerably strengthened. It seems reasonable to conclude, with the cautions stated earlier, that mature age entrants, *per se*, admitted to higher education are likely to perform better than normal age students direct from school.

TABLE 4.2 — Detailed Summaries of Studies Reviewed in Chapter 4

<table>
<tr><th>INSTITUTION</th><th>DESCRIPTION OF STUDY</th><th>METHOD AND RESULTS OF EVALUATION</th><th>CONCLUSION</th></tr>
<tr>
<td>CAULFIELD INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY</td>
<td>This report analyses the results of the 1976 intake to the Diploma/Degree of Business - Accounting. The students are divided into four categories but for our purposes, only two of these will be looked at here:
1. Special Entry students (i.e. those not qualified for normal C.I.T. entrance) and
2. Students with full H.S.C.
Results for 1st and 2nd semesters combined, and the 2nd semester are included separately here.
<u>N.B.</u> Only the performance of part time students is discussed; the number of full time Special Entry students was too small to be separately analysed.</td>
<td>(i) Analysis of success rates for the 1976 part time intake of Special Entry and Matriculated (H.S.C.) students in Accounting in 1st and 2nd semesters:
<table>
<tr><th rowspan="2">Type</th><th rowspan="2">No.</th><th colspan="5">Percentage of subjects passed in each success range</th></tr>
<tr><th>100</th><th>70-99</th><th>50-69</th><th>30-49</th><th>Drop-out of less than 29%</th></tr>
<tr><td>S.E.</td><td>43</td><td>44.2</td><td>7.0</td><td>4.7</td><td>2.3</td><td>41.9</td></tr>
<tr><td>H.S.C.</td><td>43</td><td>30.2</td><td>16.3</td><td>7.0</td><td>-</td><td>46.5</td></tr>
</table>
(ii) Distribution of grades achieved in the 2nd semester examinations by the 1976 part time intake of Special Entry and Matriculated (H.S.C.) students to Accounting:
<table>
<tr><th rowspan="2">Type</th><th rowspan="2">Total No. of Subjects</th><th colspan="6">Percentage Distribution</th></tr>
<tr><th>HD</th><th>D</th><th>C</th><th>P</th><th>P-Pass</th><th>Fail</th></tr>
<tr><td>S.E.</td><td>119</td><td>2.5</td><td>16.0</td><td>16.8</td><td>19.3</td><td>12.6</td><td>15.1</td></tr>
<tr><td>H.S.C.</td><td>124</td><td>2.4</td><td>4.0</td><td>16.9</td><td>29.8</td><td>14.5</td><td>32.3</td></tr>
</table>
The Special Entry students' failure rate in the 2nd semester is about half that of students with full H.S.C., and the percentage of graded passes (i.e. credit or higher) achieved by each group is 35.3 and 23.3 respectively.</td>
<td>The Special Entry students performed better than the students with full H.S.C., and achieved a considerably higher proportion of graded passes (i.e. credit and higher).
The drop-out rates, about the same for both groups, are quite high but it must be remembered that these students are studying part time.
"If the statistics for the 1976 intake can be shown to be typical for those of other years, then there should be no concern over the admission of the mature age unqualified (academically) type...".</td>
</tr>
</table>

TABLE 4.2 (Cont'd)

INSTITUTION	DESCRIPTION OF STUDY	METHOD AND RESULTS OF EVALUATION	CONCLUSION	OTHER COMMENTS
FLINDERS UNIVERSITY	Summary sheets of (a) the 1st and 2nd year exam results of 30 students admitted under the Early Leaver Scheme in 1974, and (b) the 1st year exam results of 57 (randomly chosen) of the 90 students admitted under the Mature Entry Scheme which absorbed the earlier scheme in 1975. (For method of selection see West et al., 1977). No formal comparisons are made between these Special Entry students and the normally admitted intakes.	a) 1974 Early Leaver Cohort (N = 30) (i) 3 students withdrew from course during 1974. (ii) the exam results of the remaining 27 were as follows: No. of subjects attempted = 71 No. of graded passes (i.e. B or A) = 28 No. of failures recorded = 5 Pass Rate = 93% No. of students eligible to continue = 26 Of these 26, 2 did not re-enrol in 1975, and a further 3 withdrew during the year. Exam results for 2nd year of study of remaining 21 students were as follows: No. of subjects attempted = 88 No. of graded passes (A or B) = 37 No. of failures recorded = 3 (3 subjects were 'incomplete' when these results were recorded) Pass Rate (incomplete subjects not counted) = 96.5% b) 1975 Mature Entry Cohort (N = 57) (i) 4 students withdrew from the course during 1975 (ii) the exam results of the remaining 53 students are as follows: No. of subjects attempted = 121 No. of graded passes (A or B) = 39 No. of failures recorded = 11 No. of subjects withdrawn = 6 (4 subjects were 'incomplete' when these results were recorded. Pass Rate (excluding incomplete subjects) = 85.5%	"It is clear from the data that the mature entrants are making pleasing progress". (Registrar)	Mature entrants generally seek admission to the Arts/Eco/Educ. courses, although a few each year are admitted to Science if they have 'an adequate background' (Science at matric. level). Medical faculty does not admit special Mature entrants, "but the selection committee for that course is prepared to consider applications from non-matriculated persons who have a background suitable for further study in Medicine".

TABLE 4.2 (Cont'd)

INSTITUTION	DESCRIPTION OF STUDY	METHOD AND RESULTS OF EVALUATION			CONCLUSION	OTHER COMMENTS
JAMES COOK UNIVERSITY	The 1974 examination results of 80 mature age students holding Provisional Matriculation status (see West et al. 1977 for details), are compared with those of 251 normally admitted entrants, on the basis of no. of subjects/ units passed.	Results	Provisionals	Normal Entrants	"The result has been encouraging and, while some fall by the wayside, the majority of applicants selected have put up a performance which compares favourably to the achievements of 'normal' matriculants". (Registrar)	Intake approx. 10% of the total new student intake each year. Although all courses are open to provisional entrants, few enrol in the Sciences.
		Unsuccessful in exams	17 (21%)	20 (8%)		
		Successful in some but less than ½	4 (5%)	18 (7%)		
		Successful in ½ but less than $\frac{3}{4}$	6 (8%)	29 (12%)		
		Successful in $\frac{3}{4}$ but less than all	5 (6%)	36 (14%)		
		Successful in all examinations	48 (60%)	148 (59%)		
		TOTAL	80	251		

INSTITUTION	DESCRIPTION OF STUDY	METHOD AND RESULTS OF EVALUATION	CONCLUSION
KURING-GAI COLLEGE OF ADVANCED EDUCATION	A course evaluation report gives information on the 1977 intake to the College. Students were divided into one of the following categories based on mode of entry: (i) Current H.S.C. (ii) Previous H.S.C. (iii) Completed/Incompleted Technical (iv) Completed/Incompleted Degree (v) Other (includes professional and overseas qualifications). According to the College's definitions of mature age students all students who do not possess current H.S.C. are regarded as mature age. It should be kept in mind that most of the mature age students (149 out of 178) attended part time, and most of those with current H.S.C. (68 out of 100) attended full time.	Table 1: Success Rate of Students by Entry Mode ENTRY MODE / Total Students / % Passed all Subjects / % Failed 1 or more Subjects / % Failed all or Abandoned Current H.S.C. 100 37 46 17 Previous H.S.C. 34 70 15 15 Completed Tech. 34 62 15 23 Incompleted Tech. 20 45 15 40 Completed Degree 8 50 - 50 Incompleted Degree 39 54 20 26 Other 43 53 19 28 Current H.S.C. students had the lowest success rate (37%); mature age student with previous H.S.C. had the highest success rate (70%). The following table sets out the number of mature age students compared to the number of current H.S.C. students who withdrew from the course. Table 2: No. Withdrew, by Entry Mode and Course Status (i.e. Part or Full time) ENTRY MODE / Number: Part time / Number: Full time / Total Current H.S.C. 10 12 22 Previous H.S.C. 9 0 9 Completed Tech. 11 0 11 Incompleted Tech. 8 0 8 Completed Degree 4 0 4 Incompleted Degree 9 1 10 Other 12 2 14 The rate of withdrawal for mature age Ss was about 30% compared to 22% for students with current H.S.C.	Mature age students have performed better than students straight from school; their drop out rate is higher than that of students with current H.S.C., but 84% of mature age students were studying part time, compared to 32% of the current H.S.C. students. The most common reason given for dropping out of the course was employment pressures, and a significant proportion also abandoned their studies for personal/health reasons. (33 of the students included in the mature age group were less than 21 years of age).

TABLE 4.2 (Cont'd)

<table>
<tr><th>INSTITUTION</th><th>DESCRIPTION OF STUDY</th><th>METHOD AND RESULTS OF EVALUATION</th><th>CONCLUSION</th><th>OTHER COMMENTS</th></tr>
<tr>
<td>LA TROBE UNIVERSITY</td>
<td>'Review of the Early Leavers Scheme in the School of Humanities'.

The examination results and withdrawal rates for all years of study (1972-1975) of 4 Early Leaver cohorts (see West <u>et al</u>., 1977, for method of selection) - 223 entrants in all - are examined in detail; a cursory comparison between E.L.s' performance and that of other students* is drawn. (The report contains a breakdown of the E.L. groups according to age, sex and occupation).

* i.e. all students in the School of Humanities.</td>
<td>
1st Year Cohort Performance
<table>
<tr><th>Year</th><th>No. Ss</th><th>Total No. Subjects</th><th>Fail</th><th>Pass Rate %</th></tr>
<tr><td>1972</td><td>20</td><td>46</td><td>-</td><td>100</td></tr>
<tr><td>1973</td><td>60</td><td>97</td><td>9</td><td>90.7</td></tr>
<tr><td>1974</td><td>67</td><td>133</td><td>4</td><td>96.9</td></tr>
<tr><td>1975</td><td>79</td><td>163</td><td>16</td><td>90.2</td></tr>
</table>
2nd Year Cohort Performance
<table>
<tr><th>Year</th><th>No. Ss</th><th>Total No. Subjects</th><th>Fail</th><th>Pass Rate %</th></tr>
<tr><td>1972</td><td>17</td><td>42</td><td>2</td><td>95.2</td></tr>
<tr><td>1973</td><td>40</td><td>87</td><td>3</td><td>96.6</td></tr>
<tr><td>1974</td><td>50</td><td>130</td><td>2</td><td>98.5</td></tr>
</table>
3rd Year Cohort Performance
<table>
<tr><th>Year</th><th>No. Ss</th><th>Total No. Subjects</th><th>Fail</th><th>Pass Rate %</th></tr>
<tr><td>1972</td><td>15</td><td>33</td><td>-</td><td>100</td></tr>
<tr><td>1973</td><td>40</td><td>109</td><td>2</td><td>98.2</td></tr>
</table>
4th Year Cohort Performance
<table>
<tr><th>Year</th><th>No. Ss</th><th>Total No. Subjects</th><th>Fail</th><th>Pass Rate %</th></tr>
<tr><td>1972</td><td>13</td><td>15</td><td>-</td><td>100</td></tr>
</table>
</td>
<td>The performance of Early Leavers has been consistently good.

Their average grade is between C and B, compared to an average grade between D and C for other students.

Their failure rates are very low (the largest failure rate approx. 9% in 1973 and 1975 at 1st Year level) when compared to all other students (15.5%) particularly at 1st Year level. The E.L. attrition rate, however, is similar to that of other students. Since drop-out is not the result of a high % of failures among the E.L. group: "The only explanations are that they lack motivation or family and financial pressures prevent them from continuing."</td>
<td>Greatest percentage of E.L.'s admitted are aged between 23 and 29 years. The sex distribution is fairly even.

They have usually received no more than 5 years of secondary schooling.

Most of them could be classified as white collar workers.</td>
</tr>
</table>

TABLE 4.2 (Cont'd)

INSTITUTION	DESCRIPTION OF STUDY	METHOD AND RESULTS OF EVALUATION	CONCLUSION	OTHER COMMENTS
MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY	The examination performance and drop-out rate of 245 mature age students, admitted with part H.S.C. (see West et al., 1977), in 1973 and through to 1975, were compared to those of the total student population.	The mean drop-out rate (1973-1975) was 50% of all part time students and 33% of all part time mature age intakes. Only the full time mature age intake of 1975 was considered large enough to compare with the total full time student intake of the same year, and the drop-out rates were 16% for mature age students compared to 26% for the total student population. The examination results over the four year period reveal that mature age students obtain a higher proportion of As and Bs compared with all students and their total pass rate is appreciably higher. The percentage of mature age students (admitted with part H.S.C.) satisfying the minimum rate of progress at the end of their first year is as follows: (i) 1973 intake: 74% (ii) 1974 intake: [illegible] (iii) 1975 intake: [illegible] (iv) 1976 intake: 88%	"... the performance of mature age students admitted on the basis of a limited H.S.C. program has been such as to support the continuation of this method of admission".	The bulk of the mature age registration is in the following three schools: 1. Behavioural Sciences 2. English, Linguistics and History 3. Philosophy and Politics. The sex distribution has changed, the proportion of females having risen substantially from about half of the 1973 intake to three-quarters of the 1976 intake. "... there is a relationship between the performance of the intake in their first year and the aggregate of the marks obtained at the H.S.C. examinations in 2 matric. subjects at 2nd level or higher plus the General Studies Paper ... The Proportion of students in the upper aggregate group (≥ 240) has increased from 40% of the 1973 intake to 54% of the 1976 intake. Further there is a larger proportion of students full time, i.e. 45% in 1975 and 1976 compared with 31% in 1974 and only 9% in 1973".

TABLE 4.2 (Cont'd)

INSTITUTION	DESCRIPTION OF STUDY	METHOD AND RESULTS OF EVALUATION	CONCLUSION	OTHER COMMENTS
MELBOURNE STATE COLLEGE	Characteristics and Performance of a Group of "Special Entry" Students at Melbourne State College, 1975. To be eligible for entry under this scheme, applicants must not possess normal entry requirements. However at least 3 students in the group had successfully completed a full H.S.C. year and many had attempted some study at H.S.C. level or its equivalent. 37 of the group (N = 50) were enrolled on a full time basis; approximately 63% were 30 years of age or older. 23 Special Entry students enrolled in the Diploma of Teaching (Primary), and 27 enrolled in the Higher Diploma of Teaching courses.	(i) Performance of Diploma of Teaching (Primary) students: Of the original 23 entrants, 1 student withdrew and 1 deferred. 20 of the remaining 21 students were full time and they passed all subjects (total: 140), achieving credit or better in 45 of the 100 subjects in which graded passes were awarded. (ii) Performance of students enrolled in Higher Diploma of Teaching Courses: Of the 27 entrants in this category, 14 successfully completed the year; 5 were not successful; 8 discontinued.	Data for comparison with the total first year intake in 1975 were not available but the results of Special Entry students in the Primary course 'appear to be quite exceptionally high'. Students enrolled in the Higher Diploma of Teaching courses performed less satisfactorily and their drop-out rates were considerably higher. "If it is argued that 'special entry' students should be expected to perform at least as well as 'normal entry' students, the data support the continuation, and possibly the extension, of the scheme, particularly for Diploma of Teaching (Primary) students".	It appears that nearly all of the 9 students who withdrew did so because of financial difficulty rather than because of lack of motivation or intellectual ability. A large number of Diploma of Teaching (Primary) students indicated that they experienced difficulty with Mathematics, some taking extra classes, but all were successful in this area.

INSTITUTION	DESCRIPTION OF STUDY	METHOD AND RESULTS OF EVALUATION	CONCLUSION	OTHER COMMENTS
MONASH UNIVERSITY	A detailed report on the Early Leavers Scheme looks at the method of selection, the characteristics (e.g. social, occupational background), problems, performance and withdrawal rate of three Early Leaver cohorts (1974-1976). Persons who (i) have suffered educational/social disadvantage; (ii) have left school for 5 years; (iii) have not completed H.S.C. are eligible to apply. The performance of Early Leavers is based on their subject results (and withdrawal rate) in 1st, 2nd and 3rd years for the 1974 intake (N = 38); the 1st and 2nd years for the 1975 intake (N = 37) and the 1st year of the 1976 intake (N = 38).	Subject results of Early Leavers in the first three years of the scheme:	Early Leavers have performed at a very high standard. In each year of study the 1974 and 1975 intake have achieved a percentage of credit or better results in over 40% with the equivalent figure of 27% for the 1976 intake. A considerable number of these entrants have joined honours schools; others have commenced combined degrees. "What was initially seen as a gesture on the part of the University to helping 'under-privileged' or 'disadvantaged' individuals may now be viewed as a means of selecting a group of able students making a considerable contribution to the University".	4% of places in each faculty may be reserved for these entrants, though in fact the number seldom exceeds 3%. In the 1st year applicants were required to state on what grounds they were 'disadvantaged', and to submit an essay on 'Why I want to come to Monash'. In later years a questionnaire was used to provide information regarding nature of 'disadvantage'; an essay is no longer required, and the final selection is made from those who have scored above a cut-off point on ASAT by the faculty committee. The report recommends this method be modified to place greater emphasis on motivation measured by capacity to overcome several pre-entry hurdles, as is the case with the Mature Age Unmatriculated Scheme at the University of N.S.W. Most are enrolled in the Arts faculty. Only one E.L. has entered the scientific faculties (i.e. Sci., Med. or Engin.).

Cohort	No. Students Enrolled	Total No. Subjects	Grades D	C	P	NN	WD	Subjects Passed %
1974 1st Year	38	88	9	28	43	6	2	90
2nd Year	29	79	14	22	37	4	2	92
3rd Year	30	69	16	20	19	10	4	79
1975 1st Year	37	102	19	28	48	2	6	93
2nd Year	31	76	15	17	30	3	11	81
1976 1st Year	38	90	6	19	52	10	3	85

Cohort	No. Students Who Withdrew	Total Withdrawal Rate % Rate Per Year	% of Intake
1974 1st Year	5/38	13	
2nd Year	6/33	18	29
3rd Year	3/30	10	29
1975 1st Year	4/37	11	
2nd Year	6/33	18	27
1976 1st Year	6/38	15	

Because of the small number of entrants no comparison is made between early leavers' Withdrawal Rate and that of normally admitted entrants.

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<table>
<tr><th>INSTITUTION</th><th>DESCRIPTION OF STUDY</th><th>METHOD AND RESULTS OF EVALUATION</th><th>CONCLUSION</th><th>OTHER COMMENTS</th></tr>
<tr>
<td>RUSDEN STATE COLLEGE</td>
<td>Purpose of this report to examine entry policies for students without H.S.C. etc. and mature age students, adopted by other institutions together with the academic performance of these students at Rusden and elsewhere as the bases for decisions. Among the categories of students (at Rusden) compared are:
(i) students of normal age (20 years or less) compared with those 21 and over at time of entry
(ii) students aged between 21 and 24 years compared to those aged 25 years and over at time of entry.
<u>N.B.</u> M.A. students have full H.S.C.</td>
<td>Analysis is based on 1st, 2nd and 3rd year results of students completing the 2nd, 3rd and 4th year of a course at Rusden in 1976. Results were given a numerical rating according to the following scale:
Honours: 4; Credit: 3; Pass: 2; Supplementary/Borderline Pass: 1; Fail/Withdrawal/Absent etc: 0

TABLE 1
The Mean Academic Performance of Normal Age Students Compared with that of Mature Age Students by Year of Course
<table>
<tr><th>Year</th><th>Age</th><th>No.</th><th>Mean</th><th>SD</th><th>t</th><th>Significance</th></tr>
<tr><td>1</td><td>Normal
Mature</td><td>764
200</td><td>2.039
2.334</td><td>0.637
0.739</td><td>5.640</td><td>< .0005</td></tr>
<tr><td>2</td><td>Normal
Mature</td><td>498
133</td><td>1.928
2.118</td><td>0.685
0.790</td><td>2.746</td><td>< .005</td></tr>
<tr><td>3</td><td>Normal
Mature</td><td>232
62</td><td>2.040
2.031</td><td>0.644
0.752</td><td>0.090</td><td>< .90
(not significant)</td></tr>
</table>
The results of the t-test suggest that mature age students (21 years +) are likely to achieve significantly better results in the 1st and 2nd years of a course at Rusden than normal age students, and about the same results in 3rd year.

TABLE 2
The Mean Academic Performance of Students Aged 21-24 Years Compared With That of Students Aged 25+ Years by Year of Course
<table>
<tr><th>Year</th><th></th><th>No.</th><th>Mean</th><th>SD</th><th>t</th><th>Significance</th></tr>
<tr><td>1</td><td>21-24
25+</td><td>120
80</td><td>2.101
2.655</td><td>0.644
5.260</td><td>5.260</td><td>< .005</td></tr>
<tr><td>2</td><td>21-24
25+</td><td>90
41</td><td>1.929
2.501</td><td>0.781
0.661</td><td>4.106</td><td>< .0005</td></tr>
<tr><td>3</td><td>21-24
25+</td><td>43
19</td><td>1.901
2.292</td><td>0.727
0.740</td><td>1.898</td><td>< .05</td></tr>
</table>
Results of the t-test suggest that students aged 25 years or more are likely to obtain significantly better results in each year of their course than students aged 21-24, in fact better than <u>all</u> students aged 24 or less.</td>
<td>Students over the age of 25 do significantly better than the 21-24 year olds, who in turn do better, at least in the 1st and 2nd years of a course at Rusden, than students 20 years and younger at time of entry.
"It is recommended that Mature students with H.S.C. or equivalent be admitted to the College".</td>
<td>"...mature age students are likely to show more variations in their results than normal age students", though this difference is 'very slight'.
(Students with T.O.Y. or other non-standard qualifications perform as well as other students).</td>
</tr>
</table>

TABLE 4.2 (Cont'd)

<table>
<tr><th>INSTITUTION</th><th>DESCRIPTION OF STUDY</th><th>METHOD AND RESULTS OF EVALUATION</th><th>CONCLUSION</th><th>OTHER COMMENTS</th></tr>
<tr>
<td>SALISBURY COLLEGE OF ADVANCED EDUCATION</td>
<td>Characteristics of Mature Age Student Teachers Compared With Matched Regular Students Based on an Accumulated Record of Psychometric Entry Testing and Academic Achievement (1974)

The original sample consisted of 63 female and 26 male mature age students (25 years of age and over) matched with 89 regular students (below 20 years of age) for sex, year of entry, and subject combination.

The mature age group consists of students who had formally matriculated and those who entered under the Mature Age Entry Scheme (see West <u>et al.</u> for details of this selection method). (No distinction is made between the two types of mature age entrants). <u>All</u> students are required to take 3 subjects, one of which - the professional studies subject is obligatory. Comparisons were made on intelligence, personality factors, teaching attitudes, and performance in the first and fourth semesters.</td>
<td>The performance of mature age and regular entrants was compared using the mean percentage score for the three subjects combined [see Table 1] and the distribution of grades in the professional studies subject [see Table 2(a) and (b)], in the 1st and 4th semesters.

"Due to 'shrinkage' of the numbers among the regular students" the number of students in the 1st semester group dropped from 84 matched pairs to 34 matched pairs in the 4th semester sample.

TABLE 1

Three Subjects Combined

<table>
<tr><th rowspan="2">Students</th><th colspan="2">1st Semester (N = 84 per group)</th><th colspan="2">4th Semester (N = 34 per group)</th></tr>
<tr><th>$\bar{X}$</th><th>S.D.</th><th>$\bar{X}$</th><th>S.D.</th></tr>
<tr><td>Mature Age</td><td>63.2</td><td>7.6</td><td>65.3</td><td>7.8</td></tr>
<tr><td>Regular</td><td>57.0</td><td>8.2</td><td>59.6</td><td>6.2</td></tr>
</table>

TABLE 2

Professional Studies Subject

a) 1st Semester Results (N = 84 matched pairs)

<table>
<tr><th>Students</th><th>Fail</th><th>Pass</th><th>Credit</th><th>Distinction</th></tr>
<tr><td>Mature Age</td><td>3</td><td>39</td><td>33</td><td>9</td></tr>
<tr><td>Regular</td><td>6</td><td>68</td><td>10</td><td>-</td></tr>
</table>

b) 4th Semester Results (N = 34 matched pairs)

<table>
<tr><th>Students</th><th>Fail</th><th>Pass</th><th>Credit</th><th>Distinction</th></tr>
<tr><td>Mature Age</td><td>1</td><td>13</td><td>14</td><td>6</td></tr>
<tr><td>Regular</td><td>2</td><td>23</td><td>8</td><td>1</td></tr>
</table>
</td>
<td>The results show that mature age students in this sample performed better than a matched group of students entering straight from school, and that this superiority tended to increase as the course progressed.

It appears too that the drop-out rate is much lower among mature age entrants; the author comments on their 'relative durability', ... readily substantiated by the college records generally'. (The number of mature age students who had withdrawn from their course by the 4th semester was not supplied).</td>
<td>(The College has two sets of provisions for mature age entrants: one for people 25 years of age and older who satisfy the reduced H.S.C. requirement, and one for those 21 years of age with no academic qualifications). An earlier report on the Mature Age Entry Programme (1970-73) compares the results of 57 mature age students entering under the two sets of special provisions, with those of the rest of the College population. The comparison 'reveals the outstanding rate of success' achieved by mature age students who gained double the percentage of passes at credit or higher level, and a failure rate one-fifth of that of the rest of the College population.</td>
</tr>
</table>

TABLE 4.2 (Cont'd)

<table>
<tr><th>INSTITUTION</th><th>DESCRIPTION OF STUDY</th><th>METHOD AND RESULTS OF EVALUATION</th><th>CONCLUSION</th><th>OTHER</th></tr>
<tr>
<td>UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE</td>
<td>A Special Entry Scheme was established in 1975 and intended to allow the admission of a limited number of persons who have not qualified for matriculation. Also, to be eligible one must be (i) a South Australian resident for 12 months prior to entry (ii) be 21 years of age or have left school for 5 years.

Applicants must attend one day at the University to write an essay and, if required, attend an interview. Final selection is made by a Selection Committee for that course which the intending applicant wishes to enter.

In 1976, 26 students were admitted under this scheme, and results of their course examinations are provided.</td>
<td>1st year performance of Special Entry Intake No. = 26
<table>
<tr><th>No. of Students</th><th>No. of Subjects</th><th>Distinction</th><th>Credit</th><th>Pass</th><th>Fail</th></tr>
<tr><td>Arts 18</td><td>45</td><td>9</td><td>16</td><td>17</td><td>3</td></tr>
<tr><td>Eco. 6</td><td>16</td><td>2</td><td>2</td><td>7</td><td>5</td></tr>
<tr><td>Science 1</td><td>1</td><td>-</td><td>-</td><td>1</td><td>-</td></tr>
<tr><td>Music 1</td><td>4</td><td>2</td><td>2</td><td>-</td><td>-</td></tr>
<tr><td>Totals 26</td><td>66</td><td>13</td><td>20</td><td>24</td><td>8</td></tr>
</table>
Overall pass rate = 88%</td>
<td>The performance of this intake proved so successful that 60 places were made available for Special Entrants in the following year.</td>
<td>Scheme is available for all courses except Medicine and Dentistry</td>
</tr>
</table>

TABLE 4.2 (Cont'd)

INSTITUTION	DESCRIPTION OF STUDY	METHOD AND RESULTS OF EVALUATION	CONCLUSION/OTHER COMMENTS
UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE	Open Foundation Course organized by Department of Community Programmes in 1974. (See West, et al., 1977 for details). Open to all regardless of educational background. Set quota of 80 in first 2 years but by end of 1975 the Open Foundation Course had secured sufficient acceptance in the University for a policy to be adopted that ALL applicants for admission would be treated on their merits, regardless of numbers. Therefore it was decided to impose no quota on the 1976 Open Foundation Course, and enrolment settled at 160. Open Foundation Course requirements: (i) attendance at two evening sessions per week throughout year (ii) 1 compulsory broadly-based subject + 1 elective subject (iii) 1 long essay each term in both subjects as well as tutorial papers. At the end of 1974 it was decided to tighten up the course in order to better equip and orient students to university studies and thereby make those who successfully completed the Open Foundation Course more confident of their ability to undertake an undergraduate course. This was done because it appeared that many (No. = 14) students who were successful in the Open Foundation Course still did not feel sufficiently equipped to enrol for university study	1. 1974 Open Foundation Course intake No. = 80 45 completed course; 31 applied for admission. Places were offered to 28, 3 of whom enrolled at other institutions; of remaining 25, 20 enrolled in Arts and 5 in Economics and Commerce. Their 1st year University performance is as follows: Overall pass rate of 86% of all units compared to 77% in Arts and 69% in Economics for M-types. 2. 1975 Open Foundation Course intake No. = 80 45 completed course, and were ranked thus: A (predicted to do very well at Uni.) = 14 B (considered safe to complete course) = 19 C (deserve opportunity but some reservations) = 9 D (not recommended for admission) = 3 Places offered to all in categories A, B and C (42). Their 1st year performance is as follows: A (N = 14): passed all units with credit or better in 63% B (N = 19): 18 passed all units with credit or better in 11% C (N = 9): 80% pass in all units with no credits or better 3. 1976 Open Foundation Course intake No. = 160 92 completed course, ranked: A = 18; B = 46; C = 21; D = 7. Places offered to all in categories A, B and C.	The Open Foundation Course has proved highly successful in terms of providing opportunities for tertiary study and an alternative route into university degree courses to a wide cross section of the community. "... it seems fairly evident that, given the choice, mature people prefer to study towards university admission in courses designed and conducted specifically for that purpose by the institution in question ... the drop-out rate of mature students from H.S.C. studies is considerably higher than the 43% from the 1976 Open Foundation Course."

INSTITUTION	DESCRIPTION OF STUDY	METHOD AND RESULTS OF EVALUATION	CONCLUSION
UNIVERSITY OF N.S.W.	Detailed reports have been compiled on progress of the first (1975) intake of Mature Age Unmatriculated students in their 1st year of study. A final report discusses the comparative performance of three groups of mature age students in relation to the criteria by which they were selected: (i) 1975 MAU intake - 2nd year performance (ii) 1975 MAU intake - 1st year performance (iii) 1976 reduced H.S.C. intake - 1st year performance In 1976 the MAU intake was selected differently from that in 1975, when students were selected on the basis of information provided by them as to why they should be admitted to the University. In 1976 intending applicants attended an obligatory meeting where they were provided with information about "range, nature and availability of the courses offered ... and given the opportunity to talk to staff members and currently enrolled older students". They were also provided with a combined application form and biographical questionnaire and given details of a 1,500 word essay to be submitted by a set date. Although a third step was planned, places were offered to all those who completed the essay assignment (71 out of the 700 who attended the meeting) since the number was so small. In 1975, 63 applicants were offered places; 56 enrolled and of these, 6 discontinued and 1 transferred. The results of remaining 49 are discussed regarding 1st and 2nd year performance. In 1976, of the 71 offered places, 63 enrolled and 7 discontinued (only 1 with failure), leaving 56 students. The results of 45 randomly selected Mature age Ss with reduced H.S.C. are also presented.	1975 MAU intake N = 49 1st year performance Session I / Session II Passed all subjects attempted: 42 / 44 Failed 1 subject: 4 / 1 Failed 2 subjects: - / 1 Sat and passed 1 subject only: - / 1 Absent - Fail: 2 / 2 No information: 1 / - Pass rate: 88% (this compares with a pass rate of 50% for M-type entrants in the Faculty of Arts, in which most (39) of the MAU students were enrolled). 1975 MAU intake N = 43 (2 discontinued early in year) 2nd year performance Passed all subjects attempted: 31 — 13 gained all graded passes; 17 at least 1 graded pass Failed 1 subject: 8 — 7 gained at least 1 credit in other subjects Failed 2 or more subjects: 2 Pass rate: 76%. Again these results are still far better than the M-type students. (Fewer students are enrolled and are attempting more subjects, i.e. 41 students in 1976 attempted 211 subjects compared to 49 students attempting 199 subjects in 1975). 1976 MAU intake N = 56 1st year performance Passed all subjects attempted: 40 [1.] Failed 1 subject: 8 [2.] Failed 2 or more subjects: 8 (3 were absent) 1. 11 students achieved all graded passes; 29 achieved 1 or more graded passes. 2. Of the 8 failing 1 subject, 3 passed the remaining 3 subjects and 4 achieved at least 1 graded pass. Pass rate: 71% 1976 Reduced H.S.C. intake N = 45 1st year performance Passed all subjects: 33 Failed 1 subject: 7 Failed 2 or more subjects: 5 In the Faculty of Arts, in which most (34) are enrolled, they gained 74 graded passes out of 174 units attempted. Pass rate: 73%	Most of the MAU students are enrolled in the Faculty of Arts but they also show a creditable performance over a wide range of subjects. (Sociology stands out on the subject in which mature age students excel. The performance of MAU students in Commerce is more variable and not as good as that of their counterparts in other faculties; it still compares favourably with that of the normal intake). "Those who discontinue do so not so much because they lack intellectual capacity but rather because they have not fully appreciated the demands that will be made on them and the amount of time and effort required to complete a university course ... In comparing the reduced N.S.C. intake with both MAU intakes the difference in performance is minimal as all three groups have performed well ... Mature students, however admitted, continue to perform at a very high level and the results of those with no matriculation qualifications fully justify the continuation of the Special Admissions Scheme".

TABLE 4.2 (Cont'd)

<table>
<tr><th>INSTITUTION</th><th>DESCRIPTION OF STUDY</th><th>METHOD AND RESULTS OF EVALUATION</th><th>CONCLUSION</th><th>OTHER COMMENTS</th></tr>
<tr>
<td>UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA</td>
<td>Two studies (a and b) of examination results of mature age entrants admitted on the Mature Age Examination (see West et al 1977 for selection method).
a) Mature Age students' 1st year results: 1970-72 (N = 265) by no. of subjects.
b) M.A. entrants: 1975 1st year results (N = 161) compared with those of 100 randomly chosen N-type entrants by results of unit examinations.
(Mature age students enrolled for a total of 284 units and N-types enrolled for a total of 403 units).</td>
<td>Study a) N = 230
62 students taking 1 subject: pass rate = 84%
112 students taking 2 subjects: pass rate = 72%
6 students taking 3 subjects: pass rate = 5 passed all 3 subjects
50 students taking 4 subjects: pass rate = 60%
(No comparison made with pass rates of N-types); 35 students (13%) withdrew from course.
Study b)
Comparison between 161 Mature Age students and 100 randomly chosen N-type students on the basis of 1st year examination results:
<table>
<tr><th>Type</th><th>Total No. of Units</th><th>Grades A or B</th><th>Grade C or Lower Pass</th><th>Fail</th><th>Withdrawals</th></tr>
<tr><td>M.A.</td><td>284</td><td>88(31%)</td><td>123(43%)</td><td>46(16%)</td><td>27(10%)</td></tr>
<tr><td>N-type</td><td>403</td><td>119(30%)</td><td>186(46%)</td><td>88 (22%)</td><td>10(3%)</td></tr>
</table>
Both groups achieved a very similar percentage of A or B passes and there was no significant difference in the overall pass rates.
The failure and withdrawal rates, when taken together, are also very similar, with 26% for the Mature Age group and 25% for the N-types.</td>
<td>Study b) shows that mature age students perform at least as well as students admitted in the normal way, especially considering that most of the Mature Age students were studying part-time. There is a tendency among the Mature Age group to withdraw rather than register a failure.</td>
<td>"... the majority of M.A. students are part time... It is noticeable that when students enrol for the subject similar to that taken in the qualifying exam the pass rate is higher".</td>
</tr>
</table>

TABLE 4.2 (Cont'd)

<table>
<tr><th>INSTITUTION</th><th>DESCRIPTION OF STUDY</th><th>METHOD AND RESULTS OF EVALUATION</th><th>CONCLUSION</th><th>OTHER COMMENTS</th></tr>
<tr>
<td>UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG</td>
<td>Record of 1st year examination results for 1975 of 46 mature age students enrolled under the Special Admissions Programme (see West et al.). (51 mature age students were admitted originally but 5 subsequently withdrew from their course).</td>
<td>The 46 mature age students attempted 169 units.
Results are as follows:
<table>
<tr><th>No. of Students</th><th>Total No. of Units</th><th>HD</th><th>D</th><th>C</th><th>P</th><th>Fail</th></tr>
<tr><td>46</td><td>169</td><td>4</td><td>18</td><td>59</td><td>78</td><td>10</td></tr>
</table>
The overall pass rate is 94.1%, and graded passes (i.e. credit or higher) were awarded in close to 50% of the total number of units in which these students were enrolled.</td>
<td>Although 1st year results of M-type entrants are not available for comparison it is clear that the specially admitted mature age students achieved very creditable results, with passes in over 90% of the units attempted, and graded passes in more than half of these.</td>
<td>It was on the basis of the 1975 group's performance that the intake was increased in 1976 to 83 (11% of the total intake).</td>
</tr>
</table>

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Section 2.

MONASH UNIVERSITY AS A CASE STUDY

CHAPTER 5

A Profile of Mature Age Entering Students

Leo. H. T. West and Pak. K. Boon

5.1 *Introduction*

The data on which this profile is based are derived from a continuing survey of entrants to Monash University conducted by the Higher Education Advisory and Research Unit. The survey administers a questionnaire to entry students and also extracts information from the administration files. It was conducted annually from 1970 to 1978 and a response rate of over 80 per cent was consistently obtained. It is now administered every second year.

Data for 1976 are used. However, where appropriate, comparative data for 1970-1977 have also been included.

The profile is considered in two parts — (a) the institutional placement of the mature age students (faculty, type of courses etc.) and (b) the backgrounds of the students. Where it is informative, comparisons are made with younger entrants. In addition two groups of mature age entrants are considered (age 22-24 and 25 years and over). This was done partly because of the different definitions of mature age entrants in different institutions and partly because of some interesting differences (either observed or hypothesized) between these two groups. A further comparison between different sexes is made to test the folklore which suggests that mature age students consist mainly of "bored middle class housewives."

It should be emphasized that the data refers to entrants in first degrees (and for the first time) at Monash University.

5.2 *Institutional placement*

5.2.1 *Faculty*

In Table 5.1, the percentage of students (25 and over) in the intake to each faculty is shown. Students undertaking combined degrees are classified in the faculty named first — thus Arts/Law is classified as Arts.

TABLE 5.1

1976: Mature Age Students (Aged 25 and Over): Faculty by Sex as a Percentage of the Intake into each Faculty

	Arts	Economics & Politics	Engineering	Medicine	Science	Law	Total	
Male	5.2	7.6	2.0	0.8	2.4	22.8	5.1
Female	22.5	2.1	0.0	0.8	0.9	6.5	8.5
Total	27.7	9.7	2.0	1.6	3.3	29.3	13.6

The Faculties — Arts and Law, and to a lesser extent the Faculty of Economics and Politics, are the faculties that admit significant proportions of mature age students. The faculty compositions are given in more detail in Table 5.2 where three age groups are compared across faculties and sexes. It is interesting that the sex bias characteristic of the Arts and Law faculties is more disproportionate in the mature age entrants than it is in the normal age entrants. In Arts, 191 (81.3 per cent) of entrants 25 and over are female, while for entrants 21 and under, 391 (69.2 per cent) are female. In Law, 21 (77.8 per cent) of entrants 25 and over are male, while for entrants 21 and under, 31 (56.4 per cent) are male.

Since it has been stated earlier that the incidence of mature age students is a growth phenomenon, the growth for the years 1970-1977 is shown for Arts, Law and Economics-Politics (Table 5.3, and Figure 5.1). The numbers in the Law intake are much smaller than Arts so that fluctuations tend to be larger. In both these faculties (and in the University as a whole) the growth rate over the period 1970-1976 was quite large. The 1977 figures come from a slightly different questionnaire conducted at Monash as part of a national survey on the effects of fee abolition (Anderson *et al.*, 1978). The definition of faculties is slightly different, in that combined degrees, e.g. Arts-Law, are included in the Law faculty. The largest effect of this is on the Law faculty figures and so the large decline in Law may be a function of this different definition. Nonetheless there appears to be at least a levelling off of mature age enrolments at Monash. Whether this is due to increased competition from other institutions for the mature age student pool or to a decline in that pool itself is not clear at this stage. An examination of the reasons for entry, (see Chapter 6) provides some information on this point.

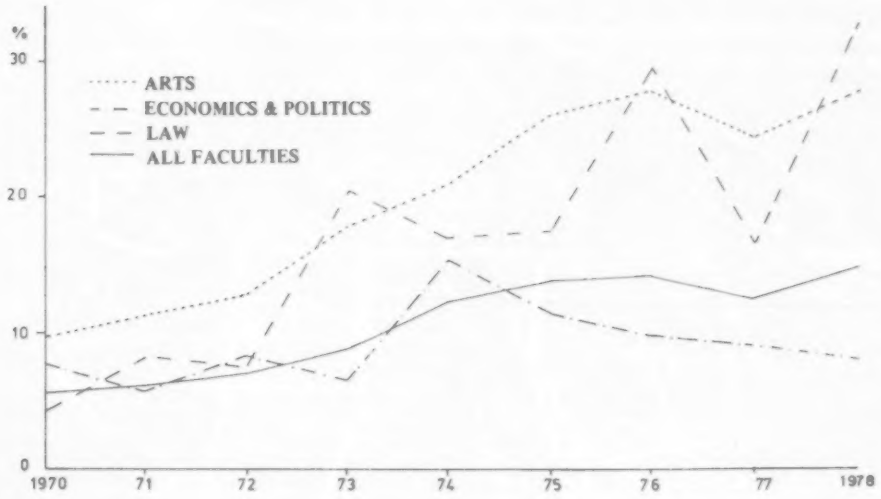

Figure 5 . 1 Proportion of intake 25 years and older from 1970 to 1978

TABLE 5.2

1976 Distribution of Students — Age Groups by Faculties by Sex

Frequencies (Column percentages)	Arts		Economics		Engineering		Medicine		Science		Law		Total	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
16-21	174 (75.1)	391 (63.3)	374 (87.8)	121 (88.3)	234 (95.5)	6 (100)	84 (97.7)	39 (95.1)	381 (94.3)	248 (94.7)	31 (51.7)	24 (75.0)	1278 (88.0)	829 (75.6)
22-24	12 (5.2)	36 (5.8)	9 (2.1)	4 (2.9)	6 (2.4)	0 (0.0)	1 (1.2)	1 (2.4)	7 (1.7)	8 (3.1)	8 (13.3)	2 (6.3)	43 (3.0)	51 (4.7)
25 & Over	44 (19.1)	191 (30.9)	43 (10.1)	12 (8.8)	5 (2.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (1.2)	1 (2.4)	16 (4.0)	6 (2.3)	21 (35.0)	6 (18.8)	130 (9.0)	216 (19.7)
Sub total	230 (100)	618 (100)	426 (100)	137 (100)	245 (100)	6 (100)	86 (100)	41 (100)	404 (100)	262 (100)	60 (100)	32 (100)	1451 (100)	1096 (100)
TOTAL	848 (32.9)		563 (22.1)		251 (9.9)		127 (5.0)		666 (26.2)		92 (3.6)		2547 (100.0)	

TABLE 5.3

Growth of Mature Age Students, Age Groups by Years and Faculty, 1970-1978

(a) Arts Faculty

Frequencies (Column %)	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978
16-21	582 (84.8)	589 (82.0)	563 (82.4)	637 (77.5)	684 (78.6)	655 (69.0)	565 (66.6)	591 (68.6)	644 (65.0)
22-24	38 (5.5)	49 (6.8)	34 (5.0)	40 (4.9)	53 (5.7)	49 (5.2)	48 (5.7)	62 (7.2)	72 (7.3)
25 & Over	66 (9.6)	80 (11.1)	86 (12.6)	145 (17.6)	192 (20.7)	246 (25.9)	235 (27.7)	209 (24.3)	274 (27.7)

(b) Economics and Politics Faculty

Frequencies (Column %)	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978
16-21	305 (85.4)	346 (88.7)	375 (86.8)	378 (89.8)	504 (81.0)	495 (86.5)	495 (87.9)	428 (88.6)	393 (89.0)
22-24	25 (7.0)	22 (5.6)	22 (5.1)	16 (3.8)	24 (3.9)	13 (2.3)	13 (2.3)	10 (2.1)	13 (2.9)
25 & Over	27 (7.6)	22 (5.6)	35 (8.1)	27 (6.4)	94 (15.1)	64 (11.2)	55 (9.8)	45 (9.3)	36 (8.1)

(c) Law Faculty

Frequencies (Column %)	1970	1971	1972	1973	u1974	1975	1976	1977	1978
16-21	135 (94.4)	140 (87.5)	128 (89.5)	97 (72.4)	99 (75.6)	81 (77.9)	55 (59.8)	155 (76.7)	29 (55.8)
22-24	2 (1.4)	7 (4.4)	4 (2.8)	10 (7.5)	10 (7.6)	5 (4.8)	10 (10.9)	14 (6.9)	6 (11.5)
25 & Over	6 (4.2)	13 (8.1)	11 (7.7)	27 (20.2)	22 (16.8)	18 (17.3)	27 (29.4)	33 (16.3)	17 (32.7)

(d) All Faculties

Frequencies (Column %)	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978
16-21	1770 (90.6)	2018 (90.1)	1988 (90.1)	2060 (87.8)	2274 (84.3)	2105 (83.2)	2107 (82.7)	2064 (83.5)	2008 (81.1)
22-24	74 (3.8)	92 (4.1)	67 (3.0)	81 (3.5)	102 (3.8)	87 (3.4)	94 (3.7)	103 (4.2)	101 (4.1)
25 & Over	108 (5.5)	131 (5.8)	150 (6.9)	204 (8.7)	323 (12.0)	341 (13.5)	346 (13.6)	304 (12.3)	366 (14.8)
TOTAL	1952 (100.0)	2241 (100.0)	u2205 (100.0)	2345 (100.0)	2699 (100.0)	2533 (100.0)	2547 (100.0)	2471 (100.0)	2475 (100.0)

However, consideration should be given to the possibility of the cause being due to increased competition. When Monash introduced its Early Leavers' Scheme and its Disadvantaged Students' Scheme which provide more "open" entry provisions for some mature age students, there were few other institutions with similar provisions. By 1976, nearly all institutions had introduced special entry schemes with some more "open" than the Monash schemes. This can be seen in Table 2.1 in Chapter 2.

5.2.2 *Type of course*

It is reasonable to consider that mature age students are more likely to undertake part-time courses than normal entrants. In Table 5.4 the type of course (part-time/full-time) is shown for the different age groups and sex.

TABLE 5.4
Age Groups by Sex by Type of Course (full-time/part-time)

Frequencies	Part-Time		Full-Time	
Row Percentage	Male	Female	Male	Female
16-21	9 (0.5)	26 (1.3)	1181 (60.8)	725 (37.4)
	35 (1.8)		1906 (98.2)	
22-24	9 (0.5)	25 (27.8)	35 (38.9)	21 (23.3)
	34 (37.8)		56 (62.2)	
25 & Over	75 (22.8)	108 (32.8)	49 (14.9)	97 (29.5)
	183 (55.6)		146 (44.4)	

Not surprisingly over 50 per cent of the 25 and over intake are part-time. Only 35 (1.8 per cent) of the 16 to 21 entrants attend part-time. There is an interesting sex difference in the 22 to 24 entrants with respect to type of course (full-time or part-time). The numbers are reproduced in Table 5.5.

TABLE 5.5

22-24 Age Group Entrants by Sex by Type of Course

Part-time	9	25
Full-time	35	21

$\chi^2 = 9.60$ $(p < .01)$

Because the numbers were small a test of the null hypothesis (that there is no difference between the sexes in the proportions who enrol full-time or part-time) was conducted. The null hypothesis was rejected (A—.01). For this age group, males are more likely to attend full-time than females. In the older age group (25 and over) there is no significant difference between the sexes with respect to their type of course ($\chi^2 = 1.97$). The 22-24 age group is much more like the normal age group.

TABLE 5.6

Comparison of 22-24 & 25 and Over Age Groups Attending Full-Time by Sex

Age	Male	Female
22-24	35	21
25 & Over	49	97

$\chi^2 = 12.8$ $(p < .00)$

One possible explanation for this is based on the reasons for mature age students attending university. There are obviously a variety of reasons, one of which is related to employment ambition — the need to get a degree in order to get a better job or to get promotion. Young male adults with this type of reason for attending may be more likely to be prepared (or be supported by their employer) to leave work and attend full-time.

The questionnaire contained a question asking the respondents' likely intention about type of course if fees existed. In Table 5.7, the responses on this question are shown cross-tabulated with the actual type of course. As would be expected the perceived effect of fees increases with age. For example 70.2 per cent of the 16-21 age group presently enrolled full-time said that they would have continued full-time compared with 55.6 per cent of the 22-24 age group and 31.9 per cent of the 25 and over age group. It is worth noting that of the full-timers for all age groups, a greater percentage

said that they would be unlikely to attend than said they would attend part-time, if there were fees.

TABLE 5.7

Likely Course if Fees Existed for Students

(a) enrolled full-time

Frequencies Row Percentage	Full-time	Part-time	Would Defer	Unlikely
16-21	1303 (70.2)	137 (7.4)	245 (13.2)	169 (9.1)
22-24	30 (55.6)	6 (11.1)	2 (3.7)	15 (27.8)
25 & Over	46 (31.9)	38 (26.4)	13 (9.0)	45 (31.3)

(b) enrolled part-time

Frequencies Row Percentage	Full-time	Part-time	Would Defer	Unlikely
16-21	5 (15.6)	19 (59.4)	2 (6.3)	6 (18.8)
22-24	3 (9.1)	26 (78.8)	1 (3.0)	3 (9.1)
25 & Over	10 (5.6)	118 (65.6)	7 (3.9)	43 (23.9)

5.2.3 *Method of qualifying*

The 1976 questionnaire did not include a question about method of qualifying that was specific to mature age entrants. In this section data is used from a special questionnaire for mature age students (at Monash, in 1977) which was included with the fee abolition questionnaire (Anderson *et al.*, 1978). The responses to the question regarding method of qualifying to enter are shown in Table 5.8.

The total figures highlight some interesting patterns. The Early Leavers' Scheme is the least common method of qualifying, while (not surprisingly) obtaining HSC by part-time study is the most common. Fifty-eight students were apparently sufficiently motivated to return full-time to secondary school in order to qualify for entry. The number of entrants with previous tertiary qualifications is quite high (21.4 per cent). The major differences

TABLE 5.8

Method of Qualifying for Entry — Mature Age Entrants 1977

Frequency (Row percentage-by sex where relevant)	Qualified when attended secondary school		Completed full-time HSC after having previously left school		Obtained HSC (or equivalent) by part-time study after leaving school		Early Leavers' Scheme		Obtained other tertiary qualification	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
22-24	14 (28)	27 (52)	12 (24)	4 (8)	6 (12)	8 (15)	3 (6)	1 (2)	15 (30)	12 (23)
Subtotal	41 (40)		16 (16)		14 (14)		4 (4)		27 (26)	
25 & Over	22 (20)	23 (12)	9 (8)	33 (17)	34 (31)	90 (48)	10 (9)	19 (10)	35 (32)	24 (13)
Subtotal	45 (15)		42 (14)		124 (41)		29 (10)		59 (20)	
TOTAL	86 (21.4)		58 (14.5)		138 (34.4)		33 (8.2)		86 (21.4)	

between the age groups are that the younger group is more likely to have qualified at school (40 per cent compared to 15 per cent) and for some reason delayed entry (see section 5.3.6 for further comment on this group), while the older group is more likely to have entered by obtaining HSC part-time after leaving school (41 per cent compared to 14 per cent). The only significant interaction effect is in those qualifying by completing HSC full-time after having previously left school. Predictably in the younger group, males are more likely to return full-time to school (24 per cent compared with 8 per cent of females) while in the older group females are more likely to do so (17 per cent compared with 8 per cent).

5.2.4 *Institutional and course commitment*

Respondents were asked to state whether the institution (Monash) and the course in which they were enrolled were their first choices. This gives some indication of their initial commitment to the institution and the course. Some writers consider these as important factors in influencing the performance and drop-out behaviour of students in tertiary education (e.g. Tinto, 1975). The responses are shown in Tables 5.9 and 5.10. Older students show a much greater commitment to both institution and course. Perhaps this is one of the reasons for their good performance despite their obvious handicaps.

TABLE 5.9

Institute of First Choice

Frequency (Row percentage by sex	Yes		No	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
16-21	756 (59.6)	485 (58.5)	513 (40.4)	344 (41.5)
22-24	30 (65.2)	41 (77.4)	16 (34.8)	12 (22.6)
25 & Over	109 (80.1)	193 (87.7)	27 (19.9)	27 (12.3)

TABLE 5.10

Course of First Choice

Frequency (Row percentage by sex)	Yes		No	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
16-21	807 (63.7)	591 (71.6)	460 (36.3)	234 (28.4)
22-24	33 (71.7)	43 (81.1)	13 (28.3)	10 (18.9)
25 & Over	117 (86.7)	197 (89.9)	18 (13.3)	22 (10.1)

5.3 *Backgrounds of mature age entrants*

5.3.1 Marital status

This section aims to answer the question "who are the mature age students?" The first background variable examined is their marital status (Table 5.11). It is commonly believed that mature age entrants are married females. It seems that there is no more likelihood that entrants 25 and over are married and female than they are married and male (73.3 per cent of male entrants 25 and over are married compared to 71.8 per cent of females). The question failed to include a category for married but separated and since there have been some suggestions that this could be an important group, such information should be sought in the future.

TABLE 5.11

Age by Sex by Marital Status

Frequency (Row percentage by sex)	Married		Divorced		Not Married	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
16-21	4 (0.3)	15 (1.8)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1231 (99.7)	801 (98.2)
22-24	10 (21.7)	20 (35.7)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	36 (78.3)	36 (64.3)
25 & Over	99 (73.3)	158 (71.8)	1 (0.7)	2 (0.9)	35 (25.9)	60 (27.3)

5.3.2 *Fathers' occupation*

Because of the small numbers involved in some occupational categories, the categories were collapsed into four groups:

Non-manual — including professional, managerial, clerical, sales occupations.

Manual — tradesmen, labourers, process workers, transport workers, etc.

Farm — farmers, fishermen, hunters, etc.

Services — police, armed forces, sports, etc.

In Table 5.12 these categories of fathers' occupation are given for each age group, together with the percentage of the male workforce in Victoria in the same categories (taken from the 1971 census).

TABLE 5.12

Fathers' Occupation

Frequency (Row percentage)	Non-manual	Manual	Farm	Services
16-21	1423 (72.6)	399 (20.4)	96 (4.9)	42 (2.1)
22-24	54 (58.7)	23 (25.0)	10 (10.9)	5 (5.4)
25 & Over	165 (56.1)	83 (28.2)	28 (9.5)	18 (6.1)
Male workforce* in Victoria (percentage)	(34.8)	(50.1)	(9.1)	(4.2)

*The omission of some minor categories resulted in the total being less than 100 in this case)

A comparison of the 16-21 entrants with the male workforce in Victoria shows that children whose fathers are non-manual workers are greatly over represented at Monash and those of the other categories are under represented. Slamowicz, Smurthwaite and West (1976) showed that there was little change in this between 1970 and 1975. For both groups of older entrants there is decreased participation by those whose fathers are non-manual workers and increased participation in the other categories.

This supports the view that there is greater participation among mature age students by those who have been previously disadvantaged by social background (on the assumption that father's occupation offers a measure of social background).

TABLE 5.13

Entrants' Previous Occupation

Frequency (Row percentage)	Non-manual	Manual	Farm	Services
22-24	31	1	0	3
	(89)	(3)	(0)	(8)
25 & Over	155	7	4	8
	(89)	(4)	(2)	(5)

This indicates that mature age entrants are upwardly mobile people who were previously disadvantaged with respect to entry into higher education because of their social background.

5.3.3 *Parents' educational level*

One other measure of previous "disadvantage" is the level of parents' education. The "disadvantage" here may be a lack of knowledge about, or encouragement to enter, tertiary education. Respondents were asked about the highest level of education reached by their father and mother. In Table 5.14 the highest level of education reached by their parent is tabulated for each of the age groups. Respondents who answered "don't know" (over 10 per cent) were excluded.

TABLE 5.14

Highest Level of Education Reached by Father or Mother

Frequency (Row percentage	Never Attended School	Not Beyond Primary	Form 1-3	Form 4-5	Form 6	Attended Tertiary
16-21	0	152	399	459	279	536
	(0.0)	(8.3)	(21.9)	(25.2)	(15.3)	(29.4)
22-24	2	9	26	21	17	19
	(2)	(10)	(28)	(22)	(18)	(20)
25 & Over	0	54	124	53	34	41
	(0)	(18)	(41)	(17)	(11)	(13)

Once again there are clear differences between mature age students and normal age students. The parents of mature age entrants have considerably less formal education than those of normal age entrants. One can argue that this is due to their lack of encouragement to continue their education from their less educated parents or the lack of information available through their parents about further education. Of course, the difference may be an artifact of a general rise in the educational level in the community — the mature age entrant's parent, being older on average, has spent fewer years in formal education.

5.3.4 *Type of school (for majority of secondary education)*

Compared with HSC enrolments, the Monash entrance cohort is biased in favour of Independent Schools and against High Schools (see Slamowicz, Smurthwaite and West, 1976). (There is no suggestion intended that the bias is deliberate.) In Table 5.15 comparison is made between type of school for each of the age groups.

TABLE 5.15

Type of School (for majority of secondary education)

Frequency (Row percentage)	State High School	Catholic	Independent (Non-Catholic)	Other	Not Applicable
16-21	980 (45.2)	488 (22.5)	569 (29.2)	52 (2.6)	9 (0.5)
22-24	57 (58)	16 (16)	15 (15)	6 (6)	4 (4)
25 & Over	151 (48)	84 (27)	51 (16)	30 (7)	7 (2)

(Year 12 enrolments for 1976 in Victoria were: State 57.6%, Catholic 21.2%, Independent 21.2%. Source: *Schools 1976*, Table 11, Canberra: Australia Bureau of Statistics).

The only clear trends are a decrease in the proportion from independent schools and an increase in the other category (which was usually "technical school"). This may be further evidence of increased participation by groups who are under represented in the normal age group entrants.

5.3.5 *Level of education reached*

In the 1977 questionnaire referred to above, respondents were asked their highest level of education reached when they *first* attended school. The responses are shown in Table 5.16.

TABLE 5.16

Highest Level of Education Reached at School By Mature Age Entrants, 1977

Frequency (Row percentage by sex where relevant)	Primary		Forms 1-2		Forms 3-4		Form 5		Form 6		TOTAL	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
22-24	0 (0)	1 (2)	0 (0)	0 (0)	7 (14)	3 (6)	14 (29)	5 (10)	28 (57)	41 (82)	49 (100)	50 (100)
Sub total	1 (1)		0 (0)		10 (10)		19 (19)		69 (70)		99 (100)	
25 & Over	3 (3)	3 (2)	5 (5)	3 (2)	20 (18)	50 (26)	31 (28)	77 (41)	50 (46)	57 (30)	109 (100)	190 (100)
Sub total	6 (2)		8 (3)		70 (23)		108 (36)		107 (36)		299 (100)	
TOTAL	7 (1.8)		8 (2.0)		80 (20.1)		127 (31.9)		176 (44.2)		398 (100)	

It is quite amazing to find that seven mature age entrants who left school before secondary school and eight who completed only first or second form of secondary school have been able to reach tertiary education. There is a difference between the two age groups for females. In the 22-24 age group 82 per cent of females reached form six level at school whereas in the older group it was only 30 per cent. Among the males the disparity is much smaller. This is probably related to the increased secondary retention rate (proportion of students entering secondary school who reach sixth form) for females which has grown from .255 in 1970 to .366 in 1975. During the same period the rate for males hardly changed (.330 in 1970, .346 in 1975). (Australia-wide data , from sixth report of Australian Universities Commission).

5.3.6 *Previous tertiary education*

Entrants were asked whether they had undertaken any previous tertiary education. The responses for the mature age entrants are shown in Table 5.17.

Although they are from different years and so not strictly comparable, there appears to be some conflict between these figures and those of Table 5.9 describing the method of qualifying for entry. In this table, 53.0 per cent report having some previous tertiary education while in Table 5.9 only 21.4 per cent report that they had obtained other tertiary qualifications. The figures can be made more compatible if it is assumed that many of those who qualified when attending secondary school have had some previous tertiary education between that time and entering Monash. It is also possible that some who have completed HSC subsequent to leaving secondary school have

also had some previous tertiary education. Overall it seems reasonable to conclude that about half of the mature age entrants have some previous tertiary education. Further information on this point is provided in chapter 6.

TABLE 5.17

Previous Tertiary Education

Frequency (Row percentage by sex where relevant)	None		University		Teachers College		Other (CAE, Technical College etc.)		Not Applicable		TOTAL	
	M	F	F	M	M	F	F	M	M	F	F	
22-24	16 (36)	11 (20)	18 (40)	13 (24)	4 (9)	16 (30)	4 (9)	10 (19)	3 (6)	4 (7)	45 (100)	54 (100)
Sub total	27 (27)		31 (31)		20 (20)		14 (14)		7 (7)		99 (100)	
25 & Over	48 (36)	106 (50)	32 (24)	28 (13)	8 (6)	26 (12)	36 (27)	40 (19)	8 (6)	13 (6)	132 (100)	213 (100)
Sub total	154 (45)		60 (17)		34 (10)		76 (22)		21 (6)		345 (100)	
TOTAL	181 (40.8)		91 (20.5)		54 (12.2)		90 (20.3)		28 (6.3)		444 (100)	

5.4 *Summary*

Data collected between 1970 and 1977 show that there are significant numbers of mature age people entering undergraduate courses at Monash, especially in the Faculties of Arts and Law, and to a lesser extent in the Faculty of Economics and Politics. Overall, the percentage of female mature age entrants is higher than the males, but at the faculty level, compositions are by no means proportionate. In Arts, the percentage of female entrants is much higher than the males while in Law, the reverse is true. In Economics and Politics, the male percentage is higher.

Not surprisingly, the majority of the mature age students are part-timers. In the younger age group (22-24) however, males tend to attend full-time and females part-time. But there is no significant difference between the sexes with respect to their type of course in the older age group (25 and over). On the question of choice in institution and course, a larger majority of the older age group (25 and over) claims Monash University to be the institution and their current course to be the course of their first choice as compared to the younger groups (16-21 and 22-24).

On method of qualifying for entry, the major differences between the age groups are that the younger group (22-24) is more likely to have qualified at school and for some reason delayed entry, while the older group (25 and over) is more likely to have entered by obtaining HSC part-time after leaving school.

Mature age entrants divide into two approximately equal groups — those who have some previous tertiary education and those who have not. Of the former, about half have another tertiary qualification while half have previously dropped out from tertiary courses without completing.

Perhaps the most noteworthy of all is the respondents' likely intention about type of course if fees existed. Findings show that mature age entrants are more unlikely to attend, particularly the older group (25 and over), than the normal age group, and a greater percentage of full-timers said that they would be unlikely to attend at all than to attend part-time had there been fees.

Mature age entrants tend to come from a slightly less favourable background when compared to the normal age entrants. When we probe into the background of the mature age entrants, we find that a higher proportion of the mature age entrants' parents are (or were) manual, farm, or services workers, and the educational level of these parents is generally lower than those of normal age students. This is more clearly demonstrated among female mature age entrants. Overall, findings suggest that there is greater participation among mature age entrants by groups which tend to be under-represented among normal age entrants.

References:

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Slamowicz, R., Smurthwaite, A. M. and West, L. H. T., "Trends and biases in university entrants: Monash 1970-1975", **Vestes,** 1976, **19,** 16-20.

Tinto, V. "Dropout from Higher Education: A Theoretical Synthesis of Recent Research", **Review of Educational Research,** 1975, **45,** 89-125.

CHAPTER 6

Reasons for Entry into Higher Education

Leo H. T. West and Elena G. Eaton

6.1 *Introduction*

The phenomenon of older people entering higher education, previously the exclusive province of the young, is both recent and widespread. It has been a movement of the seventies and has occurred in most western countries. This suggests that there may be a common set of reasons (or pressures) related to the present era and culture that motivates people already established in a life style to leave the comfort of that niche to undertake a task that is time consuming and, indeed, may be personally threatening.

This part of the research was an investigation of these reasons. The subjects are students, 25 years and over, who entered the first year of a bachelor's degree at Monash University in 1978. Some entered under special entry schemes but most qualified to enter (and were selected for entry) by traditional procedures. Details of their qualifications and entry method are reported in Chapter 5.

The research questions derived from a theoretical position developed to anticipate the factors likely to influence mature age people to undertake higher education (see West & Hore, 1978). This research approach has both advantages and disadvantages. The theoretical framework provides a structure and focus within which the most meaningful questions can be asked. Further, because it is proposed as a general theoretical position the specific results can be seen to support (or oppose) that position. This provides for a degree of generalization that could not be obtained from the results of a single institution survey. On the other hand, such an approach restricts the possibility of finding reasons that lie outside the framework. The theoretical position provides a potential for bias as well as a structure. On balance, it was considered that the advantages outweighed the disadvantages and so the theoretical framework was used to guide the study.

Apart from the derivation of what questions to ask, there were also decisions to be made about methodology. One approach would have been to use a loosely structured interview schedule in interviewing a subset of the mature age entrants. A pilot study of this approach in 1977 indicated that it would be prohibitively expensive. Another approach would have been to send a questionnaire to all mature age entrants. The problem with this approach, even if the questionnaire was fairly open ended, was that questions that were irrelevant for some people would be vital for others. For

example, for students who had previously undertaken some tertiary education, it was important to ask if they had completed that course. If they had, we would want to know why they were undertaking another; if they had not, a different set of questions were appropriate. However, if the student had no previous tertiary experience, then a totally different set of questions was needed.

The methodology adopted was a compromise between these two. Initially mature age entrants were classified along two dimensions and a set of questions specific to each category was developed for a set of follow-up, open-ended questionnaires. Details of this approach are given below.

6.2 *Methodology*

The first step involved classifying students into groups based on reasons for undertaking tertiary education as mature age students. Two dimensions were used in this categorization. These dimensions, not necessarily independent, were called, DIMENSION 1 — "Tertiary Intentions" and DIMENSION 2 — "Job Relatedness". Four categories were derived for each. These dimensions were derived from and correspond approximately to the factors discussed by West and Hore (1978). The transformation was necessary because there was a need to classify people rather than describe factors which influenced them.

For Tertiary Intentions the categories were:

(a) already possessed a tertiary qualification and needed to update it.
(b) previously attended a tertiary course but discontinued.
(c) always intended undertaking tertiary education, just delayed entry until now.
(d) never considered the possibility until recently.

It was considered that all people would be classifiable on this dimension, although in retrospect the use of "need" in (a) was unfortunate; "want/need" would have been a better choice as some people with degrees did not need to update but felt that they wanted to.

For the "Job Relatedness" dimension, the categories used were:

(a) needs a tertiary qualification for promotion.
(b) it is now useful to have a degree for present job.
(c) would like to change to a better, more satisfying job.
(d) wishes to return to the workforce.

(In many respects (d) is a subset of (c) but it was included as a separate category because of the many married women wishing to return to the workforce.) It was expected that some respondents would have no job-relatedness reasons but a category corresponding to this was not included because it was considered to be too value-loaded. For similar reasons no categories concerning personal development/satisfaction reasons were included, but an "Other, please specify" category was included to attract such responses.

The classification was achieved by including the question reproduced below in a questionnaire administered to all first year enrollees during the enrolment process.

Listed below are a number of categories relating to reasons for undertaking tertiary education as a mature age student. In the first column indicate which category best describes you. If you think that you fit into a second category as well, indicate this by using the second column.

I already have a tertiary qualification (diploma, teachers' certificate, etc.) and I need to update that qualification.	1	1
I have discontinued from a previous tertiary course and I am now continuing or starting again.	2	2
It is now useful to have a tertiary qualification for the job that I am doing.	3	3
I need a tertiary qualification to get promotion.	4	4
I would like to change to a better, more satisfying job and getting a tertiary qualification will help me do that.	5	5
I wish to return to the workforce and having a tertiary qualification will enable me to get the kind of job I want.	6	6
When I left school I did not consider undertaking a tertiary qualification. I have now decided I would like to do so.	7	7
I always intended undertaking tertiary education, I just delayed doing so until now.	8	8
Other, please specify.	9	9

.....

.....

At the same time, mature age entrants were asked if they would be prepared to be interviewed in depth at a later stage. 226 of the total (i.e. 61.7%) indicated that they would. Of these, 158 responded to the follow up. This represents 43.2 per cent of the total mature age students who enrolled during the normal enrolment period and 69.9 per cent of those who agreed to participate in the follow up study.

The procedure followed is shown in Figure 6.1. Each respondent was classified into one category of dimension 1 and/or one category of dimension 2 and/or an "other" category. Questions specific to these categories were prepared and each "willing" respondent was sent a questionnaire which contained only those questions appropriate to his/her categories together with some general questions.

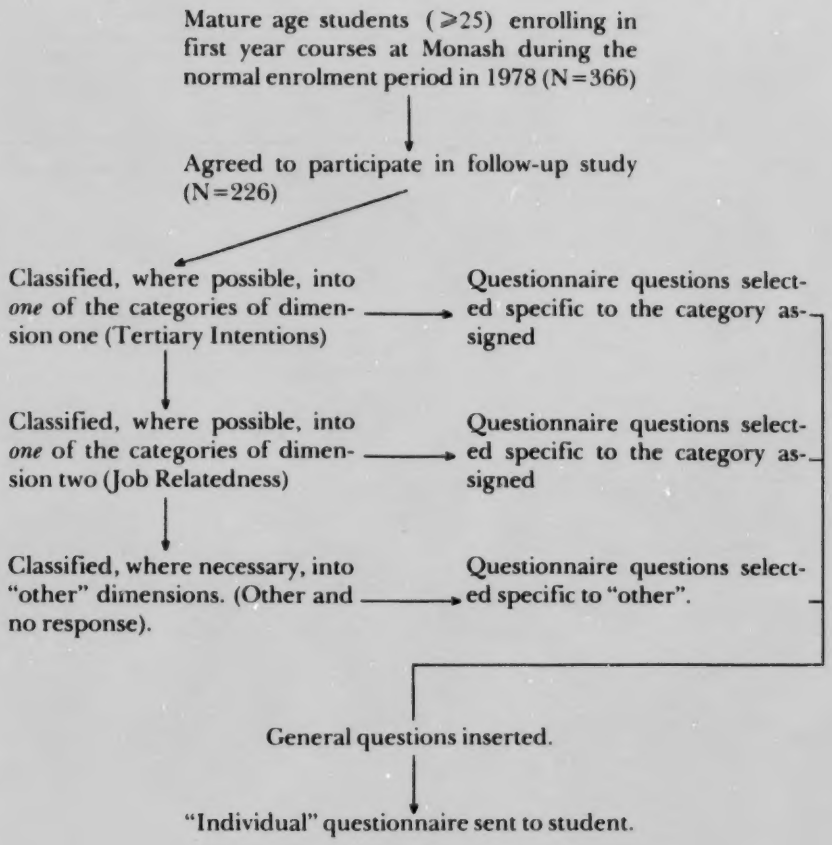
Mature age students (⩾25) enrolling in first year courses at Monash during the normal enrolment period in 1978 (N=366)
Agreed to participate in follow-up study (N=226)
Classified, where possible, into *one* of the categories of dimension one (Tertiary Intentions)
Questionnaire questions selected specific to the category assigned
Classified, where possible, into *one* of the categories of dimension two (Job Relatedness)
Questionnaire questions selected specific to the category assigned
Classified, where necessary, into "other" dimensions. (Other and no response).
Questionnaire questions selected specific to "other".
General questions inserted.
"Individual" questionnaire sent to student.

Fig. 6.1 The Design of Individual Questionnaires for the Follow-up Study.

6.3 *The follow-up questionnaire*

In the follow-up questionnaire, all 226 students received a set of general questions relating to sex, age, occupation, faculty, type of enrolment, reasons for choosing Monash and ways in which undertaking a tertiary course would affect their future. In addition to these general items, sets of questions specific to the response categories of the three dimensions (i.e. Tertiary Intentions, Job Relatedness, and Other) were designed so that each student could be sent a selection of questions directly following up his/her response to the enrolment questionnaire items listing reasons for entry. For example, a respondent who circled numbers 1 and 5 on the first questionnaire would subsequently have received the sets of questions specific to these two categories in the follow-up questionnaire.

The sets of questions specific to each category of the three dimensions are as follows:

6.3.1 *Tertiary intentions* (Dimension 1)

1. "I already have a tertiary qualification and I need to update that qualification."

Respondents to this category were asked to name their present tertiary qualification and why it was necessary to update it.

2. "I have discontinued from a previous tertiary course and I am now continuing or starting again."

Respondents to this category were asked what course they had discontinued and their reasons for not completing it.

7. "When I left school I did not consider undertaking a tertiary qualification. I have now decided I would like to do so."

Respondents in this category were asked why they had not considered undertaking degree when they left school.

8. "I always intended undertaking tertiary education, I just delayed doing so until now."

Respondents in this category were asked why they had delayed enrolling in a tertiary course.

All respondents in the last three categories (2, 7 & 8) were asked to name the factors which had influenced them to undertake a degree now.

6.3.2 *Job relatedness* (Dimension 2)

3. "It is now useful to have a tertiary qualification for the job that I am doing."

Respondents in this category were asked why a degree would be useful in their present job.

4. "I need a tertiary qualification to get promotion."

Respondents in category 4 were asked why they thought a degree was necessary for promotion.

5. "I would like to change to a better, more satisfying job and getting a tertiary qualification will help me to do that."

Respondents in this category were asked to specify the sort of job they would like once they had completed a degree course and in what ways they expected it to be more satisfying than their present position.

6. "I wish to return to the work force and having a tertiary qualification will enable me to get the kind of job I want."

Those who responded in this category were asked what sort of job they wanted and why they thought a degree would enable them to get it.

All students who responded in one of the Job Relatedness categories (3, 4, 5 & 6) were requested to specify any post-secondary training that they had, whether it was completed, and, if not, why not. They were also asked to give their reasons for not having undertaken a degree course earlier.

6.3.3. *Other reasons* (Dimension 3)

Those students who indicated that they had reasons for entry other

than those listed or who (although willing to participate in this study) failed to respond to this question were asked whether or not they already had a tertiary qualification. According to their response, they were directed to particular questions. Those who did have a previous qualification were requested to name it and say why they had returned to tertiary studies. Respondents with part of a tertiary qualification were asked why they had discontinued, and those without previous experience of tertiary education were asked why they had not undertaken a degree earlier. The last two groups were also requested to specify the factors which influenced them to enrol in a tertiary course now.

6.4 *Respondents to the follow-up questionnaires*

It was stated previously that 226 of the total 366 indicated a preparedness to be involved in the follow-up and, of these, 158 actually responded to the follow-up. How representative is this sample? In Table 6.1, the sample is compared with the total population (366) on a number of factors.

TABLE 6.1

Comparison of Sample with Population on Sex, Age, Faculty and Full-time/Part-time Attendance

Factor		Sample (N = 158)	Population (N = 366)
Sex	— Male	44 (28)	124 (34)
	— Female	114 (72)	242 (66)
Age Group	— 25-30	49 (31)	152 (42)
	— 31-40	72 (46)	135 (37)
	— 41-50	32 (20)	54 (15)
	— 51 & Over	5 (3)	25 (7)
Faculty	— Arts	130 (82)	274 (75)
	— Economics/ Politics	14 (9)	36 (10)
	— Engineering	1 (1)	6 (2)
	— Law	4 (3)	17 (5)
	— Medicine	1 (1)	9 (3)
	— Science	8 (5)	24 (7)
Attendance Pattern			
	— Part-time	106 (67)	226 (68)
	— Full-time	52 (33)	106 (32)

Notes 1. Percentages may not add to 100 due to rounding errors.
2. There are four subjects in the population for whom attendance pattern was unknown.

There are some differences between the sample and the population. The sample tends to be more female and older than the population. A comparison of the respondents (N=158) and the non-respondents (N=208) confirms this observation, and this is shown in Table 6.2.

TABLE 6.2

Comparison of Respondents and Non-respondents

Factor	Respondents (N=158)	Non-respondents (N=208)	χ^2	df	Chi square (Critical value = 0.05)
Sex					
— Male	44	80	4.05	1	3.84
— Female	114	128			
Age group					
— 25-30	49	103	24.3	6	12.59
— 31-40	72	63			
— 41-50	32	22			
— 51 and Over	5	20			
Faculty					
— Arts	130	144	9.87	6	12.59
— Economics/ Politics	14	22			
— Law	4	13			
— Engineering/ Medicine/ Science*	10	29			
Attendance Pattern					
— Part-time	106	120	0.61	1	3.84
— Full-time	52	54			

* These faculties we combined because of low expected frequencies.

Thus the sample is biased with respect to the population and the results need to be interpreted in the light of this bias.

6.5 *Analysis of the classifying questions*

Before proceeding to a discussion of the responses to the follow-up questionnaires, a discussion of the responses to the question used for the classification is presented. The first check made is to examine the uniqueness of categories in each of the postulated dimensions. Table 6.3(a) reports the number of respondents who chose two categories in dimension 1 and Table 6.3(a) the corresponding information for dimensions 2.

TABLE 6.3

Multiple Responses in the Same Dimension

(a) Dimension 1 — Tertiary intentions

		a	b	c	d
a	prior tertiary qualification*		1	5	2
b	incomplete prior tertiary			5	
c	always intended, delayed	3			
d	never considered previously			2	

(Total number responding on only one category of Dimension 1 = 218)

(b) Dimension 2 — Job relatedness

		a	b	c	d
a	for promotion*			1	
b	useful in present job	1		1	1
c	like to change to better job	3	1		4
d	return to workforce	1		3	

(Total number responding on only one category of Dimension 2 = 176)

* These short descriptions of the categories will be used throughout the rest of the chapter; however, the full description as given in the question (p.90) should be kept in mind.

These results show a good degree of uniqueness between the categories. In Dimension 1 the a−c, and c−a responses could be people who differentiated between a degree and an other tertiary qualification, that is, they always intended doing a degree (c) but undertook a non-degree tertiary qualification first. A similar situation probably exists with the b−c respondents. Perhaps they discontinued from a degree course (b) and then undertook another tertiary course. Even without these rationalizations the uniqueness of the categories is good with only a total of 18 two-category responses compared to 218 one-category responses. In Dimension 2 the c−d, d−c respondents are most likely people who want to return to the workforce and would like to return to a better job than they had previously. It was anticipated that d was overlapping with c and it seemed reasonable to collapse these c−d, d−c responses into d. This resulted in nine respondents who were considered to be two-category respondents. Even without this change, the degree of uniqueness is good.

Of course not all respondents could be classified on both dimensions, although in principle one would expect that everybody could be classified on Dimension 1. The classification of respondents on each dimension (irrespective of whether they were classified separately) is shown in Table 6.4.

TABLE 6.4

Classification of Respondents on Single Dimensions*

A.	Dimension 1 Tertiary intentions	
a.	(prior tertiary qualification)	99 (45%)
b.	(incomplete prior tertiary)	20 (9%)
c.	(always intended, delayed)	38 (17%)
d.	(never considered previously)	61 (30%)
	TOTAL	218 (100%)
B.	Dimension 2 Job relatedness	
a.	(for promotion)	14 (8%)
b.	(useful in present job)	23 (13%)
c.	(like to change to better job)	88 (49%)
d.	(return to workforce)	54 (30%)
	TOTAL	179 (100%)
C.	Other	46
	Not classified in A, B. C.	27
	No response	28

* The totals in this table exceed the sample size (366) because of multiple responses to A. B. C.

In Table 6.5 these results are presented again, however in this case those respondents who responded on more than one dimension are recorded separately.

TABLE 6.5

Classification of Respondents on all Dimensions

Dimension 1	Tertiary intentions only	Dimension 2 Job relatedness a	b	c	d	Other	Total
a	40	10	8	21	6	14	99
b	6	3	1	7	2	1	20
c	18	0	3	11	5	1	38
d	22	0	5	19	11	4	61
Dimension 2 (only)		1	5	25	24		55
Other		0	1	5	6	26	38
Total	86	14	23	88	54	46	311
Not classified							27
No response							28
Total number of respondents							366

A number of interesting points emerge from these responses.

(1) Approximately half of the mature age entrants had a previous tertiary experience and for about a third a tertiary education was never considered until recently.

(2) A significant number (about half of those who responded on Dimension 2) are undertaking a degree because they would like to change to a better more satisfying job and think that getting a degree will help them to do this.

(3) Of those who are attending because they want to return to the workforce, about one third have previous tertiary experience.

These, and other aspects, will be amplified in the next section where the detailed questionnaire results are analysed.

6.6 *Detailed analysis of the follow-up questionnaires*

To provide some structure to this analysis of the responses to questions that were mainly open ended, the respondents were initially categorized on both dimensions discussed previously. This analysis is described separately for each of the categories. The additional questions in this questionnaire allowed all respondents to be classified on both dimensions (with a "No job relatedness" category added to Dimension 2). Table 6.6 provides a summary of this categorization.

TABLE 6.6

Classification of All Follow-Up Respondents on Dimensions 1 and 2.

Dimension 2 Job Relatedness	Dimension 1 Tertiary Intentions a prior tertiary qualification	b incomplete prior tertiary	c always intended, delayed	d never considered previously	Total
a for promotion	9 (90) (16)	1 (10) (8)	0 (0) (0)	0 (0) (0)	10 (100) (6)
b useful in present job	12 (50) (22)	1 (4) (8)	2 (8) (9)	9 (37) (13)	24 (100) (15)
c like to change to better job	21 (38) (38)	3 (5) (25)	11 (20) (48)	20 (36) (29)	55 (100) (35)
d return to workforce	5 (19) (9)	3 (11) (25)	3 (11) (13)	16 (59) (24)	27 (100) (17)
e no job related reason	8 (19) (15)	4 (10) (33)	7 (17) (30)	23 (55) (34)	42 (100) (26)
Total	55 (35)	12 (8) (100)	23 (15) (100)	68 (43) (100)	158 (100) (100)

The numbers in brackets give respectively, (row percentage), (column percentage).

It is not possible, because of the non-representativeness of the re-

spondents, to generalize the parameter estimates to the total population of mature age entrants. However, it is may be possible to generalize some of the interesting trends that emerge. For example, there appears to be a relationship between the two dimensions. Mature age entrants who are motivated by job promotion tend also to have previous tertiary experience. Those who have little or no job related motivation tend to have only recently decided to undertake tertiary education. These trends and others became clearer in the detailed analysis of responses which follows.

To aid the reader a brief description of the method of reporting may be useful. The analysed responses are reported in sets corresponding to the categories Dimension 1 (Tertiary intentions). Thus all respondents categorized as 1(a) i.e. *Prior tertiary qualification* are reported as a set. Within the set the different categories of Dimension 2 (Job relatedness) are usually discussed separately. Following each set a short summary of the general reasons for entering tertiary education given by the respondents in that set is presented.

6.6.1 *Tertiary intentions: Prior tertiary qualifications (1a) (N=55)*

The respondents in this category were first divided into three groups based on their occupation — teachers and ex-teachers, nurses and ex-nurses and other occupations. The responses were analysed separately for each occupation. General descriptive data is given below for each category.

TABLE 6.7

General Descriptive Data for Teachers, Nurses and Other Occupations

	Teachers etc.	Nurses etc.	Other	Total	
Sex					
Male	6	0	5	11	(20%)
Female	20	17	7	44	(80%)
Total	26	17	12	55	
Age					
25-30	10	6	8	24	(44%)
31-40	11	10	2	23	(42%)
41-50	5	1	2	8	(14%)
51—	–	–	–		
Total	26	17	12	55	
Status					
Part-time	23	12	9	44	(20%)
Full-time	3	5	3	11	(80%)
Total	26	17	12	55	
Faculty					
Arts	23	17*	8	48	(87%)
Economics/Politics	—	—	2	2	(4%)
Law	2	—	1	3	(5%)
Science	1	—	1	2	(4%)
Total	26	17	12	55	

* one Arts/Law

TEACHERS AND EX-TEACHERS

Job relatedness: 2a, For promotion (N=6)

These respondents specifically indicated the need to update their qualification in order to gain promotion. For three "promotion" included the possibility of moving out of teaching (in one case into administration, in the others to different jobs) e.g. "It will upgrade my teacher's qualification thereby creating greater job security and promotion opportunities. It may open up other areas of employment I have never considered." Reasons for at least three of the respondents were not completely job related, as these two quotes indicate:

> "Bachelor of Arts — life-long ambition to fulfil personal interests" (response to "explain why you chose this particular course?")
>
> ". . . personally in approaching people socially I will be more confident and better informed — professionally a) indirectly — a more thorough knowledge of my teaching subject, a wide academic background and greater proficiency and self confidence b) directly — opportunities for promotion in teaching, opportunities for alternative careers, opportunities to do further study in education e.g. B.Ed., M.Ed."

Job relatedness: 2b, Useful in present job (N=5)

These respondents tended to see a degree as having wider implications for them than simply gaining promotion. For example,

> "Degree is not necessary qualification for career . . . However important because — my personal satisfaction, future staff members will have a Degree qualification" (This respondent is a Senior Vice-Principal).
>
> "Mainly out of interest . . . It will broaden my outlook — enable me to transfer to other divisions of the teaching service".

For two of the respondents, a degree was useful/necessary for them to stay in their present jobs which were seen as "improvements" on primary teaching — in one case secondary teaching and in the other remedial teaching.

Job relatedness: 2c, Like to change to better job (N=9)

Of this group, three were primary teachers who wished to transfer to secondary teaching (one had always had this ambition but had failed to get into secondary teachers college), three wanted to change to a different career (two into social work and one into law), and one wanted to become a science teacher). (The others gave no information.)

Three of the respondents, although they placed themselves in the group, could have been classified in the next group as they were housewives contemplating returning to the workforce in the future (one is an emergency teacher). Each expressed personal development, satisfaction, etc., as other important reasons.

> ". . . furthering qualification, broadening horizon, developing interests, alternative to the drudgery of housewife duties, set a study example for my children."
>
> "Stimulate me. Make me more stimulating to others. Enable me to converse and mix better with a larger variety of people. *Perhaps* eventually get me a job in Social Work area."

> ". . . It will enhance general morale and boost confidence. Provide stimulation which in turn is passed on to the family. May possibly lead to better different job but with present unemployment situation no great hopes are held for this. At this stage reasons are fairly self-indulgent."

Job relatedness: 2d, Return to workforce (N=4)

Of these respondents, two were home managers who had diplomas of teaching which would not qualify them to return to teaching and who needed a degree to do so. However one of these has now decided that she might like to seek employment in another field, "perhaps administration, management, town planning, teaching", after graduating. Of the other two, one was a teacher attempting to fulfill a life-long ambition to become a lawyer; the other had interrupted her teaching career to "serve a mission for my church for eighteen months."

Job relatedness: 2e, No job related reasons (N=2)

One of these persons was a primary school vice-principal who is attending for personal reasons.

> "I do not *need* to professionally speaking, but have a desire to pursue several intellectual avenues."

The other person, a primary school teacher, does appear to have some elements of job related reasons.

> "There is no immediate need but it does count to further your qualifications as a teacher which may be necessary for future employment as a teacher in a state school especially."

NURSES AND EX-NURSES

Job relatedness: 2a, For promotion (Nil)
Job relatedness: 2b, Useful in present job (N=5)

Three of the five respondents mentioned the trend toward degrees in nursing and so a possible future need to re-qualify. However this was a minor comment. Their major reasons concerned improving professional competence and personal improvement:

> ". . . be able to have new insights into the world about me; be able to enter the world of research; be able to apply and use the theories and concepts of the Behavioral Science disciplines in relation to nursing, education and nursing education."
>
> "I believe this course will deepen my understanding of people and enable me to give and relate with more assurance . . . it enables me to improve my qualifications without leaving work. This is important as these people need continuity of work and I need outside stimulus and the knowledge I hope to gain from this course."
>
> "I don't think at the moment it will affect my future however it may broaden my horizons as nursing tends to restrict one's association with non medical people."

One other respondent stated that returning to tertiary course was "Not so much a question of needing to as of wanting to!", emphasis was also given to improving professional competence:

> ". . . qualified capability and competence to offer more constructive and total help to people at professional level and personal benefits in (hopefully) broadening my horizon in professional and general ways and by means of academic discipline, be of increased benefit to society!"

Job relatedness: 2c, Like to change to better job (N=7)

Job relatedness: 2d, Return to workforce (N=1)

These two are analysed together, because some of those who responded 2(c) were actually home managers and so could have been considered to be 2(d) respondents.

The job changes anticipated were to social work (3), law (2), speech therapy (1) and no answer (2). The reasons for wanting to change included lack of job satisfaction,

> ". . . I will have a social work degree and hopefully will be able to practise in that area instead of being a mentally frustrated nursing sister;"

the difficulty of mixing nurse's working hours and demands with family commitments,

> "With a young family I do not feel able to take a full-time job and nursing is very boring unless you can devote a lot of time to it . . ."
>
> "I can return now to an occupation from which I get satisfaction. However the working hours are not compatible with my present occupation." (wife, mother of five children);

and changing interests,

> ". . . in the nursing field I saw the need for more social workers and was in the frustrating position of being unable to help because it was not my 'area'."

Once again there are elements of the personal development rationale. For three of the respondents these reasons were particularly important:

> "A course of study in keeping my brain active and by creating a challenge for me it sharpens my interest in other ways."
>
> "Develop my mental processes. Provide stimulation for further studies. Improve future job opportunities."

Job relatedness: 2e, No job related reasons (N=4)

These persons have tended to enter higher education for intellectual reasons. Three of them stated the need for "mental stimulation" as the factor now influencing their decision:

> "I felt I was not continuing to learn in my present job and needed some intellectual stimulation in a field other than that in which I was working."
>
> "I felt that mentally I was stagnating . . ."
>
> "I was not enjoying my return to nursing and . . . I felt a need for intellectual stimulation and being amongst like-minded people . . . It is helping me greatly to grow mentally. I consider study to be fulfilling my needs at present."

OTHER OCCUPATIONS

Job relatedness: 2a, For promotion (N=3)

Each of these respondents was a registered librarian and considered that a degree was necessary for promotion. The following quote is representative —

> "A degree, as well as a professional qualification is essential for promotion and job mobility in librarianship."

However, each of the respondents provided intellectual and professional reasons,

> "... personally, by providing *intellectual stimulation* and the necessary disciplined framework in which I must follow up what have been vague interests in the past ... professionally, by broadening my educational base and providing the required 4th year of qualification."
>
> "It will enable me to obtain a higher position in my profession. Personally it will broaden my experiences and knowledge — I think this helps a mother in raising a family."

Job relatedness: 2b, Useful in present job (N=2)

One of the respondents was a librarian who was also seeking to update her qualification. However, because she is a young mother, her need to do so was not great

> "It would update my librarian diploma so that I would be able to further my career if I wished to ... It is a sort of insurance in case anything happened to my husband."

The other was a bank officer with a diploma in accountancy, who felt that a degree would

> "Give me the security to branch out into other fields which has not been a realistic possibility."

He expands on his meaning when he lists as an influencing factor

> "A recent notion of maybe opting out of our present work oriented society, if not for ever, for a certain level of time. This point is connected with the point of security."

Job relatedness: 2c, Like to change to better job (N=5)

Each of these persons want a change of career. They are

— an account executive in an advertising agency wanting to change to a social welfare area.
— a chiropractor wanting to do medicine to become a doctor.
— a cartographer wanting an administrative position in commerce.
— a library administrator desiring a "research" position, and
— a "lecturer and consultant" (unspecified, but with a Economics degree and a management diploma) seeking to become a lawyer.

The reasons given for wanting a career change were varied. They ranged from social awareness

> "I would like to see the technology of advertising being used by people with a social conscience for the benefit rather than the detriment of society."

to specific job reasons:

> "... will give me a better chance of doing this. I do not see much future in my job at present."

Job relatedness: 2d, Return to workforce (Nil)

Job relatedness: 2e, No job related reasons (N=2)

These respondents were a medical practitioner and a home manager who previously had worked in an advertising agency. The doctor's reasons were primarily a desire to broaden his own knowledge in professionally related areas, as he indicates when explaining his course choice:

> "Sociology major — my main interests are in the field of psychiatry and social therapy. I feel there is no coherent body of theory to guide me in this field, so I want to gain the insights available from medicine, sociology and other fields concerned with this area."

The home manager's reasons were also related to self-education, although in this case unrelated to a professional area

> "I had a need to return to a tertiary course in order to obtain instruction, further and advance interest in literature, language, which I was unable to accomplish through self-education alone."

6.6.2 *Mature age entrants with prior tertiary qualifications: A summary of general reasons for entry*

This group, which represents about a third of Monash entrants who are 25 years and over, generally possess sub-degree post secondary qualifications, with the dominant groups being teachers, nurses and librarians. They divide into two main groups: (1) those who are under some pressure to update their qualifications in order to gain promotion, to remain in their present positions or to return to a previous occupation for which they are now unqualified, and (2) those who wish to qualify in a different area in order to change jobs. In addition there is a smaller group who want retraining to increase their professional competence.

However, it would be a gross injustice to these persons to give the impression that they are motivated solely by credentialism. For teachers there are avenues other than the university for updating credentials. Up to now, for nurses and librarians there are not regulatory pressures to update. Nearly all of the respondents provided reasons that could be classified either as professional improvement or intellectual stimulation.

It seems reasonable to conclude that mature age students, motivated by a reaction to increasing credentialism in their job situation, probably need also to be very concerned with professional improvement or intellectual stimulation before they decide to undertake a degree course.

6.6.3 *Tertiary intentions: Incomplete prior tertiary (1b) (N=12)*

In the analysis that follows this set was treated differently than the others. No attempt was made to separate the group on the second dimension in reporting their responses. This was done because of the small overall number. It should be noted, too, that this group represents a combination of what are commonly called "deferees" and/or "drop-outs" who have returned to tertiary education. A corollary of setting the age cut-off at 25 is that many of these people, especially deferees, have been omitted. In many ways this is desirable as they represent a quite different group to the mature age entrant and should be studied separately.

The following summarizes the responses from this group.

(i) Sex: male, 6; female, 6.
(ii) Age: 25-30 years, 5.
31-40 years, 6.
41-50 years, 1.
(iii) Faculty: Arts, 6; Economics, 4; Science, 2.
(iv) Status: Part-time, 9; Full-time, 3.

(v) Occupation of

a) part-time students:

home management/mother	3
manager	2
public servant (middle range)	1
library officer	1
technical assistant	1
secretary	1

b) full-time students:

ex-clerk (Public Service)	1
ex-factory hand	1
ex-engineering assistant	1

(vi) Discontinued Course:

a) Degree, N=4, (includes Arts, Science, Economics and Medicine).
b) C.A.E. Diploma, (excluding teacher training) N=4.
c) Teacher Training, N=3.
d) Other, N=1.

(vii) Reasons for discontinuing previous course.

Lack of motivation was the cause in only three cases: two said they dropped out because they disliked their course, the third because he wanted a break from study and was "disillusioned" with university.

The others were primarily influenced or forced to discontinue by external pressures such as illness, lack of finance or work commitments, e.g.:

"Parental illness. Fees were payable at the time so I could not afford to continue."

"Subjects required not available in evening. Unable to get day release."

"Failed 2nd year practical work (Diploma of Arts & Design). I was a conscientious student and found failure absolutely devastating . . ."

"Medicine I discontinued because I could not get a scholarship for full-time studies. Arts course I discontinued by leaving my home country, Yugoslavia."

"Illness towards the end of course. Did not resume later because qualification (Diploma of Primary Teaching) had become 'redundant'."

"I had a car accident in 1971 . . . had therapy until 1976."

(vii) Reasons for resuming a tertiary course.

Of the twelve respondents in this group, one, a library officer, did not give her reasons for enrolling in the Arts Faculty. A second, currently studying computer science, is manager of a data processing firm. Work commitments had caused him to abandon a similar course at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. In the follow-up questionnaire he merely restated that he wished to complete his qualifications.

Seven of the remaining ten respondents emphasized "job-related" reasons for returning to study, e.g.

". . . I would like to get a job in the business role . . . nobody will look at you if you haven't got (a tertiary qualification)."

"Economics. Also studying a building licence certificate course by correspondence. Hope to combine the two and either work in a building trades school or set up my own business in the industry."

"I would like to be a secondary school teacher and need a degree for this."

"Higher executive positions within the Public Service usually require tertiary qualifications."

Job dissatisfaction appears to be an important influencing factor in the case of at least five of these people e.g.:

> "Complete disgust with factory work. I felt that if I waited any longer I would perhaps never get to university — five years absence seemed the maximum limit."
>
> "Mounting frustration in my last job."
>
> "Trained as a stenographer — always a stenographer. The degree itself isn't a ticket, more like a piece of ammunition."

Three of them have left their jobs (engineering assistant, clerk, factory hand) in order to take up full-time study. Two plan to obtain jobs in the field which interests them (economics) and the former clerk intends to return to the Public Service with better chances for promotion. Two women (presently engaged in home management) want to return to the workforce as teachers; another is a secretary and wishes to change to a more stimulating job. The seventh is seeking promotion within the Public Service.

Five of the seven also mentioned "intellectual" reasons for returning to study, e.g.

> "Have always liked the Humanities."
>
> "It will broaden my knowledge immensely."
>
> ". . . also personal development."

The remaining three respondents are influenced almost entirely by "intellectual" reasons (one of them said she thought the course would enable her to do her job better but interest in mathematics appears to be the important reason):

> "I've always liked mathematics . . . don't know enough for the amount I enjoy it."
>
> "The subjects included in this course (Arts) are of particular interest to me."
>
> "Above all, wish to study, to learn, thus improve myself."

Other reasons given by this group are

> "Trying to set an example for my children."
>
> ". . . aquaintance with uni. students stirred up my interest in the student/university life."
>
> "Lower fees."
>
> "Study time given from jobs and fees are paid."
>
> "Have always wanted to return. Now my children are both at school I am able to do so."

While the people in this group have all been admitted to tertiary courses in the past, three spoke of difficulties experienced either then or now in gaining entry:

> "My father would not agree to any full-time course (when I left school). Thus I commenced Civil Engineering course part-time . . . after 5 years of solid part-time study I lost the drive; I would go to lectures but could no longer work at home."

This man now has sufficient savings to finance his absence from the work force to study Economics, the "preferred course", full-time.

The second man could not afford to do a degree after leaving school:

> "Lived in the country; could not afford to board in city — fees and no allowance."

Instead he enrolled for a Diploma of Primary Teaching. He had made

three unsuccessful attempts to gain a place at university before finally succeeding in 1978.

The third person, a woman, said:

> "Matric was the stumbling block. No one in my family has worked past a tradesman's level — no value put on education. Was working at 14 . . . started a course in architectural drafting in 1962. The course required students to be employed in the field but — female and too old at 20 to be taken on as a junior — I couldn't get one."

This woman later obtained the South Australian Adult Matriculation Certificate in order to gain entry to a teacher training course. This had to be abandoned when her husband's job required a move to Victoria,

> "My S.A. adult matriculation was not considered sufficient for entry to a University; but I succeeded after appealing directly to the Faculty (Economics) I wished to join."

6.6.4 *Mature age entrants who have previously discontinued from higher education: a summary of general reasons for entry*

These mature age students have generally discontinued previously as a result of external pressures and so probably retain some elements of their original motivation. However, like the previous group they appear to be motivated to return by a combination of credentialism and intellectual stimulation. Their reaction to credentialism is generally because of the unstimulating jobs they now hold and a perception that degree holders are able to obtain much more satisfying jobs. Once again it would be unfair to simply categorize their reasons as credentialism.

6.6.5 *Tertiary intentions: Always intended, delayed (1c) (N=23)*

Job relatedness: 2a, For promotion (Nil)

Job relatedness: 2b, Useful in present job (N=2)

Only two respondents fall within this category — one, a female aged between 26 and 30, is currently employed as a law clerk ("acting in capacity of solicitor but not qualified"); the second, a male aged between 31 and 40, has worked in the Public Service for 15 years and now holds a middle management position.

Both are enrolled in the Faculty of Arts, although this is the female student's second preference and she hopes to transfer later to the Faculty of Law. She began working as a legal secretary after having completed one year of a business studies course:

> "I was bored and wanted to earn money. I thought (the certificate) would be useless to pursue at the time."

She delayed tertiary studies because

> "I didn't know really what I wanted to do at the time. I thought I would work for a year or two and then decide what tertiary qualifications I wanted to pursue. I think I am more appreciative of the chance to pursue my qualifications now."

A Law degree will enable her to become a partner in the firm for which she now works; to be admitted to the Bar is her ultimate goal.

The male respondent is undertaking a degree in order to obtain promotion to a more senior level but interest in the subjects also plays a part:

> ". . . the study makes one flex one's mind more and it makes you think more broadly on all issues."

Ill health and the need for a break from study caused him to delay further study initially, ". . . then marriage and children came along which prolonged my intention even further."

Job relatedness: 2c, Like to change to better job (N=11)

Sex: male, 3; female, 8.

Age: 26-30 years, 3.
31-40 years, 6.
41-50 years. 1.
51 and over, 1.

Faculty: Science, 4; Arts, 7.

Status: Full-time, 7; Part-time, 4.

The three men, a former bar attendant, bank officer and tradesman, are enrolled in the Science Faculty on a full-time basis. All have a strong interest in a specific subject and these interests are reflected in their job aspirations.

One was forced to leave school at the junior level because of serious illness but continued to study and eventually managed to complete an apprenticeship. In order to gain entry to the Science Faculty at Monash he took two science subjects at Swinburne (College of Technology) in 1977:

> "I have *always* been strongly interested in astronomy . . . a very limited field of (job) opportunities to enter directly . . . Tertiary qualifications thus improve chances of selection as well as increasing the level of *my* understanding of the subject."

Botany is the main interest of the second male student who lacked the relevant HSC subjects to enter a Science course. After "a few years delay due to travel and marriage and the arrival of children" he completed sufficient HSC science subjects to gain admission:

> "I will probably be able to get a job in an area that interests me (with) the possibility of higher remuneration. I wish to become good at the subject that interests me."

The third male respondent had no field of interest he wished to pursue when he finished secondary school but now wishes to become a veterinarian; he hopes to transfer to veterinary science at Melbourne University, which was his first preference.

One of the eight women in this group held a managerial position prior to undertaking full-time study at Monash and the rest are, or were, working as clerks, secretaries or typists; most indicated that this type of work was intellectually frustrating, e.g.

> "The reason I have undertaken university studies is *to alter* my future. I have been a private secretary for 20 years and wish to change careers to a more mentally demanding one. I have no children and my work has always been an important part of my life so I want it to be more satisfying."
>
> "In the job I had before I was a robot and felt I was working below potential."

Seven of the women are enrolled in the Faculty of Arts; three of them plan to work in the social welfare or counselling fields, one wishes to teach

and the other three have no specific job in mind:

> "(A degree) may lead to a better job and more satisfaction, will certainly lead somewhere. My previous job had no future."
>
> "(Having a degree) means that when my children have grown up I will be more free to choose what I would like to do other than remaining with the bank."
>
> "It would be the type of work I enjoy, i.e. . . . extending me (intellectually). The job I have at present is pleasant but offers no challenge or scope for the present or future."

The eighth woman, formerly a secretary, is enrolled in the Faculty of Science and plans to work in psychological research and/or computer science:

> "Both fields are relatively new, fastly developing and both interest me immensely . . . a tertiary education is necessary at the level I wish to work in them."

As with the males, "intellectual" reasons are given considerable emphasis, e.g.

> ". . . (study) fulfills me, gives me a challenge, extends me intellectually."
>
> "My interest lies mainly in the Arts area; with no specific career idea in mind I felt free to study the subjects that interested me most."
>
> ". . . the foremost motivation for continuation is the stimulation the course offers. . ."
>
> "If I am not successful in terms of obtaining a degree the course of study covered will affect my general personal outlook anyway."

Five women mentioned a lessening in family demands as a factor influencing their return to study, e.g.

> "My children are now all at school."
>
> "My husband has completed his Masters Degree and the way is free now for me to start academic studies."

Another writes:

> ". . . a worn disc has been discovered in my spine. I now have to seriously consider working with my head instead of more or less manual work. I think this reinforces my desire to teach in some capacity."

It is well to remember that these women have always intended to return to study. In seven cases, the reason for not having done so earlier or not continuing on in the first place was financial difficulty.

> "It was necessary for me to leave school at 14 and take a job. Then I married, had three children. Then I had to do Adult Matric. subjects at night school while still working . . . There were gaps in between subjects due to family problems."
>
> "My parents were extremely poor and to go on to 5th year I would have had to change schools. This meant new uniforms, books, fares, etc. . . . I was capable at this stage of getting a job having been turned out of the process line of 'commercial students'."
>
> "Family finances required that I leave school at Intermediate Certificate level. Also at that time there were not many careers open to women. Nowadays mature age and sex are not the disadvantages they were then in eligibility for jobs."
>
> ". . . the main (reason) was that Dad wasn't on the scene anymore during my teens, and I had to go out to work to help support my family. And for the past sixteen years I have supported my daughter as I am a single mother."
>
> "My parents could not afford my finishing secondary school, even if I worked part-time . . . I took up HSC part-time at night school over the last two years. My decision to take up university study has never changed, the only changes have been opportunity to do so."

Job relatedness: 2d, Return to work force (N=3)

There are three respondents in this category, all women with children. Two are aged between 31 and 40 years, one is under 30. They are enrolled in the Faculty of Arts, two on a part-time and one on a full-time basis:

> "I chose Arts because I have always wanted to study English at tertiary level; but in the last few years I have become very interested in Psychology and this course enables me to develop, study this interest . . . Quite apart from the definite career opportunities afforded one with tertiary qualifications, the development and enrichment of one's intellect is an end in itself to me."

This woman, formerly a receptionist, sees gaining a degree as a means of escaping the "absolute boredom" she experienced in this type of job and, more importantly perhaps, "the feeling I had far more intellectual capacity than I was given credit for":

> ". . . having for years been treated as *just* a receptionist, I decided to set the official seal on my level of intelligence with a degree. It is amazing how even though I haven't a degree yet, people's attitudes have changed . . . Only someone who has experienced this situation will appreciate this comment."

Although encouraged by her father to aim for a degree, "the psychological effects of an horrific home environment had to be overcome before I could become a 'winner' instead of a 'loser'."

The second woman, divorced and the mother of three children, has worked part-time in unskilled jobs since the age of twenty. She had little interest in further study at the time of leaving school but since then:

> "A strong need for a broader education and interests encouraged my returning to studies at evening HSC classes. Then my marriage break-up and subsequent divorce gave me even more incentive, and a more definite goal (teaching) to work for. Especially as I have to consider my financial position and independence when looking after my children."

The last woman in this group, formerly a hotel employee, also plans to become a teacher:

> "I feel this kind of employment which would be the fulfillment of a long-held ambition, would be stimulating . . . and would keep me busy and in frequent contact with others rather than just my own immediate family."

Job aspirations aside, study ". . . will broaden my outlook and knowledge. It will also help me in raising my children." Having been prevented by her parents from completing secondary school:

> "I tried correspondence and had to stop on medical advice. After my marriage I decided to complete my HSC after the children were at school . . . My husband encourages me (to get a degree). Plus — it's now or never! — I want to get on with it."

Job relatedness: 2e, No job related reasons (N=7)

Male, 1; Female, 6.
Age: 31-40 years, 5.
41-50 years, 1.
51 and over, 1.
Faculty: Economics, 2; Arts, 5.
Status: Part-time, 4; Full-time, 3.

Aside from "home management/mother" (N=4), only one of the respondents — a manager of a chemical engineering company — is currently

employed. Like the six women in this group, his reasons for undertaking a degree course are "intellectual", stemming from "a natural interest in Politics and Economics, (and) a real desire to learn." "Professional" reasons appear to be equally important:

> "I want to learn more about how the economic system works so that I can use this knowledge to do my job better . . . gives me a change to develop new ideas based on the stimulus obtained by investigating a new discipline . . . I hope that by studying at Monash I am in the best environment to re-examine my personal attitude to my occupation and my approach to my job."

The other Economics student, a retired librarian (aged between 31 and 40 years), had first applied for admission to the Faculty of Arts but was rejected. She has apparently planned her life to a large extent around the desire to study for a degree:

> "I had made enough money to retire for life and could do the things I really wanted to . . . I spent two years travelling in Europe and now felt I was ready for tertiary education."

Both "intellectual" and, to a lesser extent, job-related reasons are important:

> "My leisure time which is spent on study will be more productive. The likelihood becoming a City Librarian again will be enhanced . . . There would be openings in other fields if I decided to return to the workforce."

The other five women who always intended undertaking tertiary education speak almost exclusively of "intellectual reasons":

> "Above all (because of) a desire to pursue learning in areas that interested me greatly . . . I see future benefits only in terms of personal enrichment, which may be of benefit to the relationships within my family."
>
> "I always wanted to go to University even if it was only to discover first hand what it was all about. I also wanted to learn more and University appears to be the next step after HSC which I completed last year."
>
> ". . . language and literature have always interested me . . . Freedom from child-rearing responsibilities and a desire to learn more of what had previously interested me at school (influenced my return to study)."
>
> "I love study and I am a widow and my family is old enough for me to pursue my own bent."

The fifth respondent, aside from wishing to retain fluency in French and Spanish and "the need to feel I am achieving something and not vegetation", is influenced by job-related reasons:

> "What I would like to do is go on and do my M.A. and possibly later tutorial work . . . I tried to get a job using Spanish but they all require qualifications."

Only one respondent appears to have decided to delay further studies for reasons not stemming from disadvantaged circumstances of one sort or another:

> "I wanted a break from study and I wanted to travel first."

At least two respondents left school at 14 years of age:

> ". . . I progressively worked through years 10, 11 and HSC at night school, after completing my apprenticeship and post apprenticeship studies."
>
> ". . . I have been involved in raising a family and following a business career."

Two women simply said their parents could not afford further schooling; two others spoke of "social" as well as financial disadvantage:

> "My parents really struggled to give me a private school 'Ladies' education . . . It

seemed an unspoken but understood thing that I must enter the workforce at the end of 5th form. There was little encouragement to go on at school although I had been a top student. Whilst I was aware of what contemporaries were doing and was fairly interested in Teachers College, the parental and social pressures on me to be a wage earner were greater at the time."

"My parents didn't believe girls needed further education and insisted on me doing a commercial course and acquiring an office position."

6.6.6 *Mature age entrants who have always intended to undertake higher education but delayed doing so: a summary of general reasons for entry*

This relatively small group are nearly all motivated by a single factor — a disenchantment with their work or life and the perception that a degree will allow them to obtain more satisfying jobs or have more satisfying lives. Except for one, they all blame their delayed entry on external circumstances (e.g. financial pressures) rather than a personal decision to travel etc.

6.6.7. *Tertiary intentions: never considered previously (1d) (N=68)*

Job relatedness: 2a, For promotion (Nil)

Job relatedness: 2b, Useful in present job (N=9)

The respondents in this category (7 male, 2 female) include four middle range public servants, a policeman, a marriage guidance counsellor, a Telecom clerk, a library technician and a computer programmer. (Only the last two have left their jobs to take up full-time study). Six of these persons indicated that the lack of a tertiary qualification has hampered them in gaining promotion or recognition:

". . . I became successful in my job (computer programming) but realized that I was stuck in a low position because of my lack of education."

". . . There is a limit to status and permanent employment without that 'piece of paper'."

"I was performing the duties of a Senior Librarian with qualifications and salary of a Library technician . . ."

"Seeing graduates fill top jobs at work (Public Service) without having 'seniority' (influenced me to get a degree)."

". . . unless you get a degree . . . you battle up the wall trying to be promoted over (people with seniority). Also your 10 years private enterprise experience is usually not taken into account."

"To possibly receive recognition for certain expertise and not be just another battling clerk."

The remaining three have undertaken a degree primarily to take advantage of opportunities being opened up within their field:

". . . there is an increasing use of statistics and mini computers and I am hoping to include these aspects in my studies."

"There is a growing use of Police with Law degrees in Committal Courts, and I am anxious to enter this field . . ."

"A recent reorganization within Telecom has opened up additional opportunities for technical staff — especially if they supplement technical and management qualifications with a degree."

Only one of the respondents expresses a desire to change her field of employment. The other reasons given by this group all have to do with improving professional competence (only one emphasizes "intellectual"

reasons as well):

> ". . . should help me to understand people more (important as I control a large skilled staff)."
>
> "To gain a broader outlook in a planning role and also to gain more knowledge of marketing and market research . . ."
>
> ". . . It will enable me to be the sort of librarian I want to be . . . innovative and progressive and able to exercise some initiative."
>
> "Having ten years practical experience it would now be useful to have greater theoretical background."
>
> "Sociology has captured my interest . . . and it could tie in with my career of school planning." (This man plans to major in Sociology.)

In answer to the question: "Why didn't you do a degree earlier?", one did not respond, two indicated that their time was taken up with job-training courses and two others merely said that they weren't qualified to enter after leaving school. The others were prevented from continuing their secondary education for "family reasons":

> "(Insistence that) I hurry up and get out to work and augment the family income."
>
> ". . . Lack of self-confidence stemming from parent influence which stressed that it was not right 'to reach for the sky' and just accept Intermediate basic pass."

At least four of these people had returned to school and studied HSC part-time in order to gain university entrance qualifications.

This group differs markedly from the 1(d) Group as a whole in two important respects — all except two are male and their occupation level is relatively high in comparison to that of the latter, which is overwhelmingly comprised of female office workers (stenographers, clerks, etc.).

Job relatedness: 2c, Like to change to a better job (N=20)

Of these respondents, 7 male and 13 female.

(i) Female respondents

All of the women in this category except two — one an ex-laundry hand, the other an ex-nursing aid — are working as secretaries and studying part-time (N=5), or *used* to work as secretaries and are now studying full-time (N=6).

A desire to escape the boredom and/or low status associated (at least in their experience) with this type of job appears to be a major, if not the main reason for eight of these women deciding to undertake a tertiary qualification, e.g.:

> "Secretarial work is very mundane. One is more or less just a machine basher — men in the office — even most juniors — have more status."
>
> "The office-type job I had I found soul-destroying."
>
> "Having progressed to a highly paid, top-level secretarial position, I became bored . . ."

(A need for intellectual stimulation and the sense of not having fulfilled their potential in the employment sphere is another way of putting it; more will be said about this aspect when "other reasons" given by this group are discussed.)

All of these women are enrolled in the Faculty of Arts. Two plan to

teach, one intends to do a higher degree and "hopefully remain an academic", and a third (a woman of fifty) feels that since she is no longer able to cope with heavy manual work, a degree will enable her "to get a satisfying job for the remaining fifteen working years left to me". Some women plan to transfer either to Economics (N=1) or to Science in order to major in psychology (N=2) — a not uncommon goal among mature age students, particularly women, who lack the Science pre-requisites — or to Social Work (N=2); these plans are reflected in their job aspirations.

One of those wishing to major in psychology is working towards a position in personnel:

> "If I were younger I would set my sights a little higher and aim for a career in psychology . . . a tertiary qualification is no longer a guarantee of a better job."

(This last point was made in passing by a couple of men in the sample but none of them seem to have lowered their job expectations because of it.) At least four of the women anticipate no great change in their employment after gaining a degree:

> "Better equipped to stay in the workforce in the future as degrees become the criteria for even secretarial positions. *If* I get an Arts degree it would improve my chances of going from secretarial work to *perhaps* an administrative type of employment."
>
> "I would like to work for a Professor as a secretary . . ."
>
> "I don't really think (a degree) will help me as I'll be too old by the time I complete it." (age 31-40 years)
>
> ". . . eventual qualifications will probably get me more responsible secretarial employment."

(ii) *Male respondents*

The male sample, rather less homogeneous where employment level reached is concerned, includes a ministerial advisor, a middle range public servant, a new car salesman, a motor mechanic, an electronics technician (in the Army), a clerk and an advertising assistant. As with the women, serious job dissatisfaction appears to have propelled the last three respondents into a degree course (Arts); their job aspirations are fairly ill-defined:

> "Possible teaching . . . or something like script-writing in the entertainment-plus-education field . . . *Anything* has to be better than the job I had."
>
> "An English teacher maybe . . . I have not given it much thought."
>
> "Career guidance or geriatrics."

The others with the exception of the ministerial advisor have specific employment in mind. Two are enrolled in the Faculty of Economics.

> "Employers expect their employees to have formal qualifications to prove they are capable of satisfying the job responsibilities."
>
> "Because industry and commerce demand a (tertiary qualification)."

The ex-motor mechanic is studying Medicine, an opportunity very rarely made available to mature age students. He does not say why he has decided to take up Medicine now (he is between 26 and 30 years of age) except that becoming a doctor will be "more rewarding in every way"; lack of interest stopped him from undertaking a degree straight after leaving school.

(iii) *Other Reasons Given for Undertaking a Degree*

Interest in a particular field of study and employment which relates to it, together with a lively sense of the disadvantages associated with not having a tertiary qualification where competing for jobs is concerned cover the reasons for this group undertaking a degree course. As a rule they are not motivated job-related reasons, in the narrow sense of the term, and less than half have a *specific* job in mind.

"Intellectual" reasons were given by fifteen of the respondents, e.g.:

"Tertiary education has the capacity to expand your mind."

". . . a broadening of social and intellectual horizons. . ."

"A need to stretch my mind after thirty years of marriage and rearing a large family. . ."

"I like psychology and felt [I] would be good at it (career guidance and geriatrics); taking Arts to complement my own philosophy and to understand many social and moral issues plaguing me."

"Even if I never utilize what I learn from this course, the fact is that my understanding of life and society will have been enlarged and it will still have been worthwhile."

Five respondents believe having a tertiary qualification will improve their confidence socially, e.g.:

"It will make me a more interesting and educated person."

(iv) *Reasons for not undertaking a degree after leaving school.*

Lack of interest or ability ("I didn't think I had the brains"; "I failed matric.") were the only reasons given by the men for not having undertaken a tertiary education after leaving school. Except for one whose father had encouraged him to go to University, no mention was made to parental pressure or financial difficulty as having influenced them.

These two factors, separately or together, operated in the case of 10 female respondents. Lack of ability ("My marks were not high enough to gain entrance into a university") was mentioned only once, and four others indicated that they had wanted to continue their education, e.g.:

". . . with reluctance I left school before the end of 6th form."

"Personal family reasons prevented me from doing the Matriculation year, although I had hoped to become a secondary school teacher."

Four women spoke of financial difficulty, e.g.:

"I lived in the country and had no access to either HSC or tertiary education. I could not afford to board and or pay university fees."

"I was the second eldest of a family of eight and had to leave school early to help support the others . . . Up to now I neither had the time, nor the opportunity, nor the finance."

The notion that tertiary education was unnecessary for girls (and in some cases, active discouragement from parents) was mentioned as an influencing factor by seven of the women, e.g.:

"Family reasons — my father decided what I would do and he felt tertiary education was not for girls and I didn't need it to go to Business College."

"My motivations were towards getting married, buying a house (and earning the money to do so) and having children — Any desires I did have towards a higher education were definitely not encouraged by my parents."

"It was considered remote. The 'good government job' I was offered was considered by my parents too good to miss. . ."

"Father didn't feel it necessary."

Job relatedness: 2d, Return to the workforce (N=16)

Sex: Female, 15; Male, 1.

Age: 26-30 years, 3.
31-40 years, 12.
41-50 years, 1.

Faculty: Arts, 15; Engineering, 1.

Status: Full-time, 10; Part-time, 6.

Employment Level Reached and Job Expectations

All of the respondents were or are employed as office workers (clerks, typists, secretaries, etc.) with three exceptions — an advertising copywriter, an agricultural technical assistant and a saleswoman.

Ten women have a clear idea of the field they wish to work in after becoming qualified — teaching (N=3), social work (N=4), engineering (N=1), librarianship (N=1), and "a career in writing" (N=1), e.g.:

"I feel an Arts degree will enable me to choose the career I want instead of just working for money and as an alternative to staying at home vegetating."

"All positions advertised in Social Welfare field ask for a degree."

"The degree itself is merely a piece of paper in my mind but the type of occupation I hope to pursue requires that piece of paper."

". . . my life experience tells me I can come up with answers for friends, relatives with problems. Education in certain areas will enable me to be paid and respected for what I can do now, but a degree proves I can, and will enable me to get a job . . ."

The others have no specific career, other than an "interesting" one, in mind, e.g.:

"*May* lead to an interesting career . . . to a type of job which could be easier to accept than some others . . . I am doing subjects which interest me rather than doing subjects for a specific occupation. . ."

(The above respondent, the only male in the group, is between 26 and 30 years of age. He had previously been employed as a clerk in order to save money to travel.)

"I do not think I need a degree to return to the workforce but after not having worked for 8 years a degree will aid my confidence in my knowledge (and the employers') that I am capable and that my brains haven't deteriorated being 'just a housewife'!"

"Hopefully" (a degree will provide) "a better prospect for employment and a larger pay packet."

Ten respondents gave "intellectual" as well as "job-related" reasons for undertaking degree course, e.g.:

"To broaden my knowledge."

"It will make me a person who is better able to appreciate life and hopefully, more understanding."

"I do want and need the stimulation of learning that goes towards getting a degree."

"I started HSC in 1976 as a hobby but gained such tremendous satisfaction (and a few headaches from a rusty brain) that I was anxious to go on . . ."

". . . I have always felt the lack of a good education and feel sure the course will be self-fulfilling."

". . . I want to know about particular aspects of society."

Another significant factor influencing at least five women to undertake a tertiary course now is a relaxation of family demands — not surprising since nearly all the women in this group are aged between 31 and 40; e.g.:

"Children now at school — that phase finished — now time to further self."

"House now bought, kids settled at school . . . I've helped my husband at night-school, worked to pay kid's school fees. It's my turn."

Two others have been influenced by increasing family responsibilities:

"I will need, in a couple of years' time, to support a family. I am not prepared to do this by working full-time as a secretary. I am hopeful that this course will lead to a full-time teaching position — a more rewarding way of earning very necessary $s."

". . . the responsibilities of being divorced and the need to secure some professional standing for myself."

In contrast to Group 2(c) who had not been absent from the workforce, only one respondent spoke of the increasing demand for employees with a tertiary qualification (". . . I wish to prepare myself for that time when a post-secondary education will be obligatory"), and dissatisfaction with a previous job was mentioned by only three women, e.g.:

"There is no sense of achievement as a secretary — no job satisfaction."

Some women saw tertiary study as a means of improving their self-confidence:

"I have always been aware of the gap in my education when people discuss Shakespeare and poetry etc. so I grabbed the opportunity to go to university very firmly. . ."

". . . studying is a confidence booster."

"My self-esteem" (will be affected) "I can't be 'just a female' if I can earn a degree."

Reasons for not having undertaken a degree course earlier

Once again the most frequently mentioned reasons for this group not having continued their education earlier have to do with family pressure and class/social mores of the time:

"I wasn't interested in a degree earlier; coming from a working class family, the subject wasn't entertained and a good job with a good income was considered more important."

"There was active discouragement from my family."

". . . I didn't even know what a degree was at that time . . . the idea of going to university was not just an impossible dream, it was completely alien to my way of life at that time."

"I wasn't interested in further study. Also my guardians seemed to expect me to get a job and I didn't really mind going to work."

"My parents were opposed on principle to my continuing my education because they regarded themselves as not having had the same opportunity . . ."

". . . it wasn't the thing to do. Either work in a factory or a shop, or if you were brighter, work in an office — I did."

"Parental pressure to do secretarial course."

> "My parents were in the lower income bracket and higher education was not considered an option for me. Boys in our group would have been considered (as future breadwinners) but not a girl. I grew up with the idea that I would leave school at 16 and work in an office as it had been 'good enough for my mother'."

Financial pressure was mentioned by four women; two others did not respond to this question (one had recently discontinued a physiotherapy course at the Lincoln Institute because of family commitments). Two others merely indicated that the opportunity had not been available to them.

Of the sixteen people in the group only two — one of them male — appeared not to have been influenced by one of the above mentioned reasons:

> "I hadn't thought of anything I particularly wanted to do in tertiary education. On the other hand I wanted some money to wander about Australia and overseas. I wasn't in a great hurry to become a fully fledged member of the workforce."
>
> "Didn't need it — went straight into journalism. Those days education system wasn't as valid as practical experience in the career I was destined to follow."

Job relatedness: 2e, No job related reasons (N=23)

Sex: Male, 7; Female, 16.

Age:	Males:	26-30 years, 2.	Females	26-30 years, 1.
		31-40 years, 3.		31-40 years, 4.
		41-50 years, 2.		41-50 years, 9.
				51 and over, 2.
Faculty:	Males:	Arts, 5	Females:	Arts, 16.
		Law, 1.		Law, —.
		Economics, 1.		Economics, —.

Status: Males, Part-time, 4; Full-time, 3.
Females, Part-time, 16; Full-time, —.

Occupation:

Males:
- Craft teacher (ex-cabinet maker) 1
- Public Service clerk 1
- Shipping clerk (ex-salesman) 1
- Assistant T.V. producer 1
- Musician 1
- Sales representative 1
- Student (at La Trobe Univesity) 1 (Total = 7)

Females:
- Home management, 11 (6 had previously worked as clerks, typists, etc.)
- Public Service clerk, 1.
- Cook, 1
- Legal secretary, 1
- Library technician, 1
- Interviewer, 1 (Total = 16)

Three of the men in this group stated exclusively "intellectual" reasons for undertaking a degree course now; two are enrolled in the Faculty of Arts and the other is studying Law:

> "Arts — I wanted to study purely for the intrinsic value . . . fulfilling an ambition that has grown over the last 10-15 years . . . I need to prove to myself that I can do it."

"Arts (for) my own individual development . . . one of the great surprises of my life to discover that learning was a lot of fun. It was a natural progression to move from HSC to University study."

"Law (It will affect my future) not in terms of a career but in terms of intellectual development . . . improve my critical and analytical skills."

The other four men give a combination of "intellectual" and "job-related" reasons but again the emphasis is on personal development, e.g.:

"Frustration. I went back to school part-time because I'd always wanted to . . . after completing matric. I found a lot of previously unasked questions became interesting enough to want to know the answers . . . Also because my lack of education some jobs I'd tried for had been regarded as too much for me. And I needed to prove to myself that I could play the game."

"A falling level of job satisfaction caused me to return to high school (evening classes) . . . I decided to continue learning Arts included subjects of most appeal . . . If an attractive career opportunity became available my studies may be of assistance."

". . . build a solid foundation, intellectually, to live through middle age and onwards, make me a more 'equipped' person for life generally . . . increase my job mobility options . . ."

All 16 women are enrolled in the Faculty of Arts on a part-time basis. Whereas five of the seven men in this group are aged below 41, more than half of the women (9) are between 41 and 50, and two are over 50. As is usual for women in this age group many are experiencing decreasing family demands, so that time to devote to their own personal development is now available, and their reasons for undertaking a course are almost exclusively 'intellectual' e.g.:

"Desire to stretch the mind a bit. Always regretted not doing so before. Children more independent. Friends attending (Univ.) advised mature age part-time students not regarded as oddities."

"The abolishment of university fees and my youngest child starting school* . . . Politics and English . . . interest me enough to wish to study them in some detail." (*Another man mentioned these two factors as being influential.)

"I realize my children will be independent in the near future and I would like another interest . . ."

"Early Leaver scheme . . . In most facets of life, intellectually, socially and I trust in time economically, quality of life will be vastly improved. On a more personal level . . . an aid to becoming 'me', not mum, not a daughter, sister, nanna but 'me' a person."

Six indicated that contact with further education through their spouse or children, or encouragement from their family were important factors in the decision to take up a degree course, e.g.:

"The fact that the opportunity existed for a person of my age to fulfil a desire I thought would never be a reality . . . the most important factor being that my family encouraged me to try university . . ."

"Broaden knowledge — stimulation by own family, three adult students at tertiary institutions. Had worked in academic world before marriage."

". . . I would also like to prove I am capable of obtaining a degree as my husband has one and my children are all hoping to go onto tertiary studies."

". . . My eldest son is at Melbourne University. My daughter intends to go and my husband has completed his degree course. I felt I could now concentrate on studies for myself . . . I am positive I will now be happier in these roles (of wife and mother) with my family seeing me as an individual."

As mentioned earlier all 16 women emphasize "intellectual" (self-development) reasons. The following comments are included because they make points which have not yet been mentioned:

> ". . . I hope to be able to take on work of more responsibility in the future but do not know . . . whether my studies will be of use to this aim . . . I like personal involvement and less attachment to a typewriter."
>
> ". . . I am married to a lecturer and am subject to contact with a lot of academics. I began to feel like an intellectual back water and decided to do something about it."
>
> "I'm only doing it to further my own knowledge but of course it may lead to me entering a different field of employment one day. Feel I have never reached my full intellectual capacity . . . needed to prove I was as capable as I think I am . . . I will be a 'new mum' shortly so have time to devote to study and it will keep me in touch with the rest of the world!!"

Reasons for not having entered a degree course earlier

Of the men, one had been prevented by illness from going beyond the eighth grade; another, of French descent, had had an insufficient mastery of English; a third had been put into a school for "maladjusted children" ("I survived it until 15 and then ran like mad"). Two men said that work commitments and family responsibilities prevented them, one adding that he "had no desire to do any study". Another "wished to join the working class (of which) I had a highly romantic idea", and the seventh spoke of the social mores of the time: "In 1956, when I left school, degree courses tended to be for the children of wealthy, professional or otherwise notable people."

Much the same point was made by six of the women, with several drawing attention to the fact that further education was very often considered unnecessary for females:

> "Being female, living in Western suburbs in the early post war era, no thought was given to tertiary education."
>
> "Only exceptional or highly motivated students considered tertiary education and I was average."
>
> "I was encouraged to leave school and had no knowledge of possible alternatives."
>
> ". . . Parental pressure (further education considered superfluous for females)".
>
> "I left school in 1955 with my Leaving Certificate. At that time few students especially girls, were encouraged to aim at obtaining a degree."
>
> "In the 1950s it was generally considered sufficient education for a girl to obtain intermediate certificate (year 10). Also family circumstances would not have encouraged me."

Financial reasons, e.g.:

> ". . . My parents did not have the money . . . it was necessary for me to work."
>
> "The opportunity was not available to me. Lack of finance and long working hours are insurmountable problems."
>
> "Parents could not afford tertiary education, 1944",

were given by eight women.

Of the remaining two female respondents one had failed the Matriculation Certificate; another had been busy "rearing a large family".

6.6.8 *Mature age entrants who had not previously considered tertiary education: a summary of general reasons for entry*

This is the largest group of mature age entrants to Monash, and they seem to be motivated by a lack of job or life satisfaction coupled with opportunity arising in many ways.

For some, job dissatisfaction is related to credentialism, providing barriers some cases to advancement but more often to more interesting work. For others, job dissatisfaction involves being stuck in a not very stimulating situation (especially common with secretaries) and a desire to break out from this and begin a new career. There are a smaller number of people motivated by retraining notions: in order to cope with the knowledge explosion in their area, to increase their professional competence, and so on.

Home managers seem also to be motivated by lack of job satisfaction (where "job" here, is of course, unpaid work related to the home and family). The need to achieve, to be mentally stimulated, to broaden social and intellectual horizons are frequently quoted as major factors.

When discussing reasons for their lack of interest in higher education when they were young, most of the respondents cite the social mores of the time (especially via family pressure) usually discouraging them from completing secondary school and qualifying for entry to higher education.

6.7 *The factors influencing mature age involvement in higher education*

The foregoing analysis has concerned the reasons given by mature age students for their entry into higher education. The richness provided by their responses would be lost in any attempt to summarize. So it is intended to turn the issue around and consider the factors that are causing the general phenomenon of mature age demand for higher education in the community rather than the reasons influencing individuals.

We propose that there are four general factors

- changed attitudes towards education in the community
- an increased credentialism or — as some people call it — qualifications inflation
- the knowledge explosion.
- a general decline in job and life satisfaction.

6.7.1 *Changed community attitudes towards education*

The first of these factors is reflected in a number of ways, perhaps the most dramatic being the increased secondary retention rate. The increase in Victoria is shown in Figure 6.2.

Other indices are the increase in university participation rate for the 17-22 age cohort which has risen from 3.5 per cent in 1946 to 9.6 per cent in 1977. (In fact this has been dominated by the increased secondary retention rate discussed above — see also Williams *et al.*, 1979). These indices are a reflection of very significant changes in attitudes towards tertiary education, especially for females. Open access to any youngster "good enough" has become the philosophy, not the total reality. However, there are some direct corollaries from the growth figures themselves. We have drawn a wedge on

Figure 6.2 to represent the number of people who are not qualified to enter tertiary education who would have been if the 1975 secondary retention rate had existed since 1955. If we assume that there has been no change in the intellectual level of the cohorts who completed secondary education in the last two decades, then this wedge represents a number of people who are the intellectual equals of those who are currently qualifying for tertiary entrance. After making some assumptions, we estimate that there are some 155,000 people between the ages of 20 and 35 who fall within this category in Victoria — and because the secondary retention rate for females began lower than that for males, the greater proportion is female.

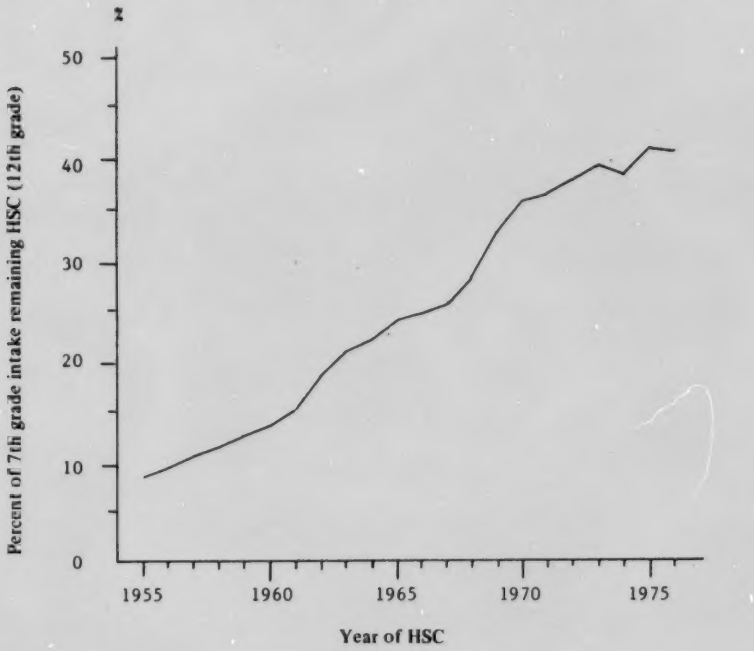

Figure 6.2 Secondary retention rates, Victorian secondary schools, 1950-1976. (Source: Victorian Education Department, Statistics and Operations Research Unit).

Most of the "Never previously considered tertiary education" group, the largest component of the Monash sample, fall into this group. Most left school before qualifying for tertiary entrance. Of course they are influenced to enter by other factors (to be discussed below) but it is worth noting that they are not strongly motivated by job related factors (see Table 6.6).

A second corollary of the vast increase in tertiary participation rate is a greatly increased contact with tertiary education. Many families are experiencing their first contact with universities and colleges through their children who are often the first members of their family to undertake a degree course. This contact has in some cases increased awareness among parents and so has led to participation by some of them.

6.7.2 *Increased credentialism*

"Credentials creep" or "qualifications inflation" has been a feature of the last few decades. Jobs that were competently carried out by unqualified or lesser qualified people are now filled by degree holders. In some instances this has reached the point of formal requirements; in others the pressures to "be qualified" are less overt but just as real. Primary school teaching is an example of the former situation. Two-year teaching diplomas are no longer sufficient. In some other areas, particularly nursing and librarianship, what used to be "in-house" qualifications are now becoming formal qualifications in established colleges. This might be seen as the "writing on the wall" indicating a future qualifications requirement in these professions. More covert pressures exist in areas like the public service, banks, insurance companies, even supermarket chains, where graduates are now being appointed to positions that, in the old sense at least, did not require a tertiary training.

6.7.3 *The knowledge explosion*

Credentialism is not entirely an artificial pressure. The knowledge explosion and its associated technological advances has provided demands for increased knowledge at the top end of the professions at least. For some this re-qualification might even be a form of retraining for a new job.

As a factor, credentialism is influencing different people. Some need a degree for promotion or to stay in a job (this is particularly so of teachers). Some will find a degree useful in their present job. Some married women wishing to return to the workforce have been trapped by credentialism. They are no longer qualified to return to their previous jobs and need to requalify to return or to change to a new job.

6.7.4 *General decline in job and life satisfaction*

Although the knowledge explosion and technology has made increasing demands on a small band of top professionals, it has placed decreasing demands on most other workers. What used to be demanding, and perhaps more satisfying, jobs are now machine operated. This ranges from fairly simple tasks, e.g. keeping ledgers, to much more complex tasks, like operating a complex milling machine or lathe. We can expect that the engineer who operated a complex lathe received much greater satisfaction than the operator who now produces an identical product using a computer-operated machine. Exactly the same situation has occurred in the home. Tasks like baking, washing, etc. that used to be demanding have now become automated. But this reduction in demand has brought with it a reduction in satisfaction. When our grandmother's washing came up nice and white, she felt good — *she* had achieved something. Today the same washing turns out white or grey because of the action of the machine and/or the soap powder. We are not regretting the passing of a less efficient era and the development in both the job and home situation of labour-saving devices. However, their introduction has removed a major provider of personal achievement and satisfaction — needs that continue to exist but which are now relatively

unfilled. Tertiary education is one avenue for satisfying those needs. It is clear from the comments made in the follow-up questionnaires that many of the mature age entrants are motivated by this type of reason. They comment specifically on their dull lives now and on the "intellectual stimulation", "personal satisfaction" etc. that they hope to achieve through undertaking a degree.

6.7.5 *Conclusion*

In concluding this chapter, two important points need to be made. Firstly, the current interest in higher education by adults is a contemporary phenomenon which has its causes in changed community attitudes to education, to credentialism and the knowledge explosion, and to a technology-related general decline in life and job satisfaction. Secondly, while it is true that most entrants are influenced by more than one of these factors, mature age students are not homogeneous — there are quite distinct groups with different reasons for entry and different needs and expectations.

References

West, L. H. T., & Hore, T. "The Exodus of Mature Age Students into Higher Education: A Theoretical Explanation". Paper presented at "Returning to Study: The Mature Age Students", A conference held at The University of Sydney, 14-18 August, 1978.

CHAPTER 7

Attitudes of staff towards mature age students

Pak. K. Boon

7.1 *Background and aims of the study*

Public awareness and gradual relaxation of entry requirements in tertiary institutions have in the last decade contributed to a steady growth in the enrolment of mature age student (see Chapter 1). However, it must be pointed out that the growth in the enrolment of these students has never been evenly distributed across all faculties. At Monash, for instance, (Chapter 5) mature age entrants in Arts and Law have soared since 1970, yet Science and Engineering have attracted very few mature age students. It is uncertain whether this is due to lack of interest or lack of qualifications necessary to meet the pre-requisites, or both.

While the growth continues, tertiary institutions are facing the problems of re-defining their entry requirements as well as their selection methods, particularly when increasing evidence has shown that the performances of mature age students are as creditable as, and in many instances better than, that of normal age students (see Chapters 3 and 4). Although the Higher School Certificate (HSC) still remains the major requirement in selection, an increasing number of tertiary institutions are looking beyond this procedure for possible alternatives. So far, various schemes have been introduced to allow applicants who are older than normal age students to enter the institutions under provisions for "disadvantaged group", "mature age students", or "early leavers" with minimal or no qualification at all. However, applicants are liable to undergo various aptitude tests as part of the selection procedures, and in most cases, interviews and references are required. The national survey of 98 tertiary institutions (as described in Chapter 2) has shown that of all the institutions approached, the majority did not consider the minimum entry requirement of HSC *necessary* for the admission of mature age applicants (Chapter 2, Table 2.1). Selection was based mainly on one or more of the following methods: special tests, interviews, work references (or experiences), and certain academic background (Chapter 2, Table 2.2).

There are various ways in which the efficacy of these relaxed entry requirements and alternative selection procedures have been examined. One useful source is the academic staff who deal with the mature age students. They are the ones most aware of academic standards and student performance. Their attitudes about minimum entry requirements and alternative selection procedures will be influenced by the complex range of issues that such changes raise. Their judgments, admittedly subjective, will

be based on a multiplicity of influences (academic standards, impact on other students, performance, strains placed on the system, and so on) in contrast to the single criteria (like academic performance) upon which more objective evaluations must rely.

Apart from being a source of information about the usefulness and/or effectiveness of mature age students entry schemes, there is also the intricate relationship between the staff and the students to be considered. On one hand, not only may the very presence of mature age students affect an academic's preparation of teaching materials, and the way the materials are presented, it also may affect the classroom situation in which, it is sometimes said, mature age students are seen as aggressors, adopting dominating roles. On the other hand, academic staff are generally aware of the vast differences in the background between mature age students and their normal age counterparts. They may be called upon to help and orientate those students who are facing problems of assimilation to institutional programmes because of a relatively long period of absence from a normal educational environment. They may also find themselves involved in similar but more vital problems which these students encounter when they (the students) attempt to adjust and balance the various roles to which they find themselves committed. Unlike normal age students, the majority of mature age students are studying part-time while working full-time (see Chapters 5 and 8), and most of them are married with family commitments as well. Consequently, they are more sensitive to institutional pressure than normal age students, and may be more likely to drop out when they fail to balance and adjust themselves to these roles.

The resultant strains on the staff and the students in general, and the interpersonal relationship between the two in particular, may therefore be considerable. Although the problem is itself important in that it affects the teaching standards of the staff and the performances of the students, the solution to this problem calls forth a more complex set of research questions than those which were addressed by the present study.

It is therefore essential to regard the study described in this chapter as a preliminary one which proposes nothing more than to examine academic staff's attitudes towards mature age students in relation to entry methods for these students, the students' subsequent academic performance and contribution, and some observations about the problems they raise.

7.2 *Methodology*

All faculties, except Medicine (where there were insufficient numbers of mature age students to warrant inclusion) were included in the study. A fifty per cent random sample of academic staff, stratified according to level of appointment and faculty, was used. The 1978 Monash University Calendar was used to provide the target population.

The questions concerning minimum qualification and selection procedures were derived from the responses of institutions to these practices (described in Chapter 2). Questions were asked about three aspects of performance and contribution, *viz*, tutorial contribution, overall performance, and influence on the course. These were phrased as comparisons with normal age students (as judged by the staff member). Two questions were

asked about special teaching problems, one forced choice question focused on 'special treatment", the other an open-ended general question. Finally the age and sex of the respondent was requested. A copy of the questionnaire is included in an appendix to this chapter.

7.3 *The respondents*

The questionnaire was sent out to the 330 staff in July 1978. A single follow-up to all of the sample was sent out in October 1978. An overall response rate of 71.5% was obtained. This was fairly satisfactory despite the fact that some sections of the sample yielded a poorer response rate than the others. A few unanswered questionnaires were returned on behalf of staff who were away on study leave, or who had left Monash permanently. Also a small number of staff returned the questionnaires unanswered because they did not think the questions applied in their situations. These mainly came from the faculty of Engineering. No new samples were drawn to replace them. Tables 7.1 and 7.2 show the response rates for levels of appointment and faculty.

TABLE 7.1

Response rates by levels of appointment

	Number in Population	Number in Sample	Number Responding	(as per cent of sample)
Professors	73	39	28	(72%)
Assoc. Professors/ Readers	80	42	26	(63%)
Senior Lecturers	239	120	89	(74%)
Lecturers	129	65	47	(72%)
Principal Tutors/ Senior Tutors	70	35	28	(78%)
Tutors	56	29	18	(62%)
Total	647	330	236*	(71.5%)

TABLE 7.2

Response rates by faculty

	Number in Population	Number in Sample	Number Responding	(as per cent of sample)
Arts	213	109	90	(83%)
Economics/Politics	123	63	41	(65%)
Engineering	86	44	28	(64%)
Law	63	33	21	(64%)
Science	162	81	56	(69%)
Total	647	330	236*	(71.5%)

* There were 237 respondents. One did not respond to this question.

The respondents were 83.5% male (n=198) and 14.8% female (n=35), with 1.7% (n=4) not responding to this question. Thirty-eight per cent of the sample (n=90) came from the faculty of Arts, while the second highest, 23.6% (n=56) came from the faculty of Science. More than half of female staff were from faculty of Arts, (62.9%, n=22), as opposed to 33.8% (n=67) of their male counterparts.

Age distribution showed that 60% of the sample were under 40 years of age, and 44.2% of the total were in their 30s. After re-grouping into three age groups there were 34.2% between 23 and 34 (n=81), 38.8% between 35 to 44 (n=92), and 24.9% over 45 (n=59). Five people (2.1%) did not answer this question.

The overall response showed that female staff were generally appointed at a lower level than their male counterparts, and as expected, that older staff tended to be at a higher appointment level than the younger ones. This structural correlation is significant in that although each of the component variables of age, sex, level of appointment and faculty may be treated as an independent variable for analysis, causal inference between such independent variables and the dependent variables may not be easily established or identified. This is mainly due to the problem of identifying the intervening variable(s) among the component variables within the structural correlation.

7.4 *Minimum qualifications for mature age entry*

The findings suggest that HSC is still widely supported among staff as minimum qualification required for mature age applicants to be eligible for entry, although it is clear that few staff favoured *full* HSC (16.9%, n=40) as compared to 32.9% (n=78) of "at least half HSC", 19.4% (n=46) of "less than half HSC", and 27.8% (n=66) of "no HSC".

As anticipated, the faculties of Engineering and Science both showed a strong commitment to the HSC. Their respective responses to "at least half to full HSC" were 92.3% (n=24) and 62% (n=33). The faculty of Arts was evenly divided over the issue, with 46.5% (n=40) favouring "at least half to full HSC" and 53.5% (n=46) favouring "less than half HSC — no HSC". The Law faculty showed the strongest inclination by far for "no HSC", having 61.9% (n=13) as compared to the faculty of Economics and Politics which had 39% (n=16).

A tendency to favour "no HSC" was also found among the three major component variables (age, sex and level of appointment): 38% (n=33) of staff aged between 23 and 35 favoured "no HSC" as compared to 25% (n=22) of the 36 to 45 age group and 24% (n=12) of the over 46 age group. Female staff showed a stronger inclination for "no HSC" than their male counterparts. The percentage of female staff favouring "no HSC" was 48.5% (n=16) as compared to 25.4% (n=49) of the male respondents. Different preferences for minimum qualifications were also shown by staff from different level of appointment 40% (n=18) of Senior Tutors/Tutors favoured "no HSC" as compared to 27% (n=35) of Senior Lecturers/ Lecturers and 24% (n=13) of Professors/Associate Professors/Readers.

There is also an interesting difference between HSC supporters and non-HSC supporters on the "Tutorial Contribution" of mature age students. The value-scale for "Tutorial Contribution" ranged between "a bit worse", "about the same", "a bit better" and "much better" when compared to "normal" students. The percentages which the respondents of "no HSC" gave to the value-scale were 0%, 6.5% (n=4), 30.7% (n=19), and 62.9% (n=39) respectively; compared with 2% (n=3), 13.6% (n=21), 47.4% (n=73), and 37% (n=57) respectively for the "HSC" supporters. Although the correlation is significant the causal inference between HSC preferences and performance rating may not be made, and since the relationship between the two is reciprocal and mutually reinforcing, the dependent variable cannot be identified here.

7.5 *Selection procedures for mature age students*

Ten choices were given for the question on selection procedures for mature age students, and respondents had the option of choosing one or more answers as they deemed suitable. Table 7.3 shows the composition of responses solicited. This section, essentially regarded as the extension of the previous section, solicited the most open responses in the whole questionnaire, and has invariably made the analyses and interpretation more difficult.

TABLE 7.3 Composition of responses

Type	Number	Percentages (%)
1 answer	88	37.1
2 answers	66	27.8
3 answers	50	21.1
4 answers	14	5.9
Unidentified	19	8.0
Total	237	100.0

Preliminary analysis has shown that when all responses were totalled, the "interview" was the most favoured procedure among all respondents. Table 7.4 shows the *total* responses as chosen by the 237 respondents.

TABLE 7.4 Frequency of selection procedures

Selection Procedures	Frequency	% (out of 237)
The normal formula based on HSC	21	8.9
The normal formula with points added	23	9.7
A score based on part HSC	79	33.3
Special tests	84	35.4
An interview	128	54.0
Work reference or experience	77	32.5
Open entry (first come, first serve)	5	2.1
Open entry with ballot	9	3.8

Although there are multiple ways of using the data from this section, the emphasis, as originally intended, must be placed on the differentiation between those who support full or part HSC, and those who support other selection procedures. The latter may be more advantageous to mature age applicants than the former.

Overall, there appears to be a strong shift of preference *away* from HSC as the selection procedure. Although this has been propounded in the previous section (section 7.4), the phenomenon becomes more intensified in this section. For example, comparison between the respondents who supported "no HSC" in the previous section and the respondents who supported "other procedures" (non-HSC procedures) in this section has shown a remarkable increase in the actual number favouring the non-HSC approach. The figures respectively show 27.8% (n=66) for "no HSC" as compared to 40.1% (n=95) for "other procedures". Table 7.5 shows the comparison between the two sections.

TABLE 7.5 Comparison between minimum qualification and selection procedures

Minimum Qualification		Selection Procedures	
Full HSC	40 (16.9%)	Full HSC	34 (14.4%)
At least half HSC	78 (32.9%)	Full HSC + Others	10 (4.2%)
Less than half HSC	46 (19.4%)	Part HSC	16 (6.8%)
No HSC	66 (27.8%)	Part HSC + Others	63 (26.6%)
No response	7 (3.0%)	Others (single)	38 (16.0%)
	237 (100.%)	Others (multiple)	57 (24.1%)
		Unidentified	19 (8.0%)
			237 (100.%)

There is also a general increase of support for non-HSC approach among the component variables. Table 7.6 represents the summary of changes in responses among the component variables.

Although the decrease in number of supporters for "part HSC" and the increase in number of supporters for "no HSC" may be described as dramatic, the most surprising feature was a slight increase in the actual number of supporters for "full HSC" in certain section of the sample. This illogical increase was mainly due to the fact that while most of the respondents who chose "full HSC" for minimum qualification still chose "full HSC" for selection procedures, there were a few respondents who chose, "part HSC" (mainly in the "at least half" category) for minimum qualification in the first place and later decided on "full HSC" (mainly in the "with points added for mature age students" category) for selection procedures.

Among the *multiple* responses (54.9%, n=130, N=237*), the most favoured procedure was "an interview" (85.4%, n=111) before "work reference or experience" (58.5%, n=76), "special tests" (53.9%, n=70), or "past HSC" (48.5%, n=63).

TABLE 7.6 Summary of changes in responses

Component variables	Minimum qualification			Selection procedures		
	Part HSC/*			Full HSC/**	PartHSC/***	
	Full HSC	Part HSC + Others	No HSC	Full HSC + Others	Part HSC + Others	No HSC
Sex						
Male	36	108	49	37	72	74
	(18.2%)	(54.6%)	(24.8%)	(18.9%)	(36.4%)	(37.4%)
Female	4	13	16	7	5	19
	(11.4%)	(37.1%)	(45.7%)	(20.0%)	(14.3%)	(54.3%)
Level of appointment						
Prof./A.Prof./	13	28	13	10	22	19
Readers	(24.1%)	(51.9%)	(24.1%)	(18.5%)	(40.7%)	(35.2%)
Sen.Lect./Lecturers	20	75	35	27	47	47
	(14.7%)	(55.2%)	(25.7%)	(19.9%)	(34.6%)	(34.6%)
Sen.Tut./Tutors	7	20	18	7	10	28
	(15.2%)	(43.5%)	(39.1%)	(15.2%)	(21.7%)	(60.9%)
Age groups						
23-35	14	39	32	16	23	42
	(16.5%)	(45.9%)	(37.7%)	(18.8%)	(27.1%)	(49.4%)
36-45	16	52	22	14	36	34
	(17.8%)	(57.8%)	(24.4%)	(15.6%)	(40.0%)	(37.8%)
46 + Over	9	29	12	13	17	18
	(18.0%)	(58.0%)	(24.0%)	(26.0%)	(34.0%)	(36.0%)
Faculties						
Arts	13	47	26	17	30	35
	(14.4%)	(52.2%)	(28.9%)	(18.9%)	(33.3%)	(38.9%)
Economics & Politics	2	23	16	1	19	18
	(4.9%)	(56.1%)	(39.0%)	(2.4%)	(46.3%)	(43.9%)
Law	3	5	13	2	4	15
	(14.3%)	(23.8%)	(61.9%)	(9.5%)	(19.1%)	(71.4%)
Science	9	37	9	12	20	19
	(16.1%)	(66.1%)	(16.1%)	(21.4%)	(35.7%)	(33.9%)
Engineering	13	11	2	12	6	7
	(46.4%)	(39.3%)	(7.1%)	(42.9%)	(21.4%)	(25.0%)

* Refers to "At least half HSC" and "Less than half HSC".

** Refers to "The normal formula based on HSC" and "The normal formula with points added for mature age students".

*** Refers to "A score based on part HSC".

The combination of "an interview" and "work reference or experience" was the most popular among all the multiple responses, polling 50.0% (n=65), as compared to 46.2% (n=60) for "an interview — special tests", and 38.5% (n=50) for "an interview — part HSC".

Overall findings indicate strongly that assessment based on *full* HSC as a single selection procedure is no longer viewed by academic staff as a

satisfactory method for the admission of mature age applicants to the university. This is substantiated by 18.6% (n=44, N=237) who supported full HSC (with or without other procedures), as compared to 33.3% (n=79, N=237) who supported part HSC (with or without other procedures), and 40.1% (n=95, N=237) who supported procedures other than HSC, full or part. Table 7.7 shows types of responses (categorized as "single responses" and "multiple responses") being correlated with selection procedures (categorized as "full HSC", "part HSC", and "others", or "non HSC"):

* N: Number of total respondents;
n: Number of respondents in the sub-group under discussion.

TABLE 7.7

Types of responses by selection procedures

	Full HSC	Full HSC + Others		Part HSC + Others	Others (Single)	Others Multiple)	Total
Single	34	0	16	0	38	0	88
Responses	(38.6%)	(0.0%)	(18.2%)	(0.0%)	(43.2%)	(0.0%)	(37.1%)
Multiple	0	10	0	63	0	57	130
Responses	(0.0%)	(7.7%)	(0.0%)	(48.5%)	(0.0%)	(43.9%)	(54.9%)
Sub-total	34	10	16	63	38	57	218
	(14.4%)	(4.2%)	(6.8%)	(26.6%)	(16.0%)	(24.1%)	(92.0%)
Total	41		79		95		218
	(17.3%)		(33.3%)		(40.1%)		(92.0%)

N.B. All percentages have been based on N=237, rather than N=218, although 19 of the respondents were not identified.

7.6 *Performance*

The responses to the three questions relating to the performance of mature age students (tutorial contribution, overall performance, and influence on course) were all favourable. Table 7.8 summarizes the findings.

TABLE 7.8

Summary of responses to performance questions

Tutorial contribution (relative to normal age students)	Much worse	A bit worse	About the same	A bit better	Much better	Total Responses
	0	3	26	96	96	221
	(0%)	(1.3%)	(11.0%)	(40.5%)	(40.5%)	
Overall performance (relative to normal age students)	Much worse	A bit worse	About the same	A bit better	Much better	Total Responses
	1	6	62	113	37	219
	(0.4%)	(2.5%)	(26.2%)	(47.7%)	(15.6%)	
"Influence on your course as a whole" (rating)	Very Negative	Negative	No Influence	Positive	Very Positive	Total Responses
	0	2	28	151	42	223
	(0%)	(0.8%)	(11.8%)	(63.7%)	(17.7%)	

The response patterns were not significantly different for staff members from different faculties, different age groups, different levels of ap-

pointment or of different sex. (Although difference in degree of rating, such as "a bit better" as compared to "much better", was noted, no further analysis has been made to differentiate them in this section since the main concern has essentially been the comparison of performance between mature age students and their normal age counterparts, for which the terms "better" and/or "worse" are felt to be sufficient.)

These results confirm the findings of performance studies for mature age students (see Chapters 3 and 4). Staff believe that mature age students perform better overall than normal age students, that they have a positive influence on the course, and that their tutorial contribution is considerably better than that of normal age students. Although these opinions are subjective and not based on specific examination results, they do take cognisance of a wide range of student performances. They represent the subjective judgments of staff based, in part, upon their contact with students performing at all levels — in class, in tutorials, in written work, in preparation, and so on. The strength of the opinion (at the worst, only two per cent think that mature age students perform worse than normal age students) is quite remarkable, and provides strong support for the conclusions obtained from the more objective studies reviewed in Chapters 3 and 4.

There were a few comments made by staff justifying their ratings over the performance of mature age students. There were some who saw the problem of overall generalization in their ratings of performance within and/or beyond the number of mature age students they had in class. As one respondent pointed out:

> "The good ones are much better, the bad ones are really awful. However, the latter are comparatively rare." — Arts —

Another wrote:

> "Some are very good and a valuable asset; some are very bad. But perhaps one expects more out of them." — Arts —

One respondent went further:

> "It is impossible to generalize concerning mature age students. Those satisfying normal requirements in 20-30 age group generally stand out. Those of greater age and/or with lower formal qualifications may be very poor." — Engineering —

Despite the reluctance to generalize the performance of mature age students the attitude of most of staff may be described as lenient and favourable towards these students. As one respondent noted:

> "Essay on time; few motivation problems; emotional problems faced or under control; interest in hard work: these set mature age students (the best of them, of course) apart from all but the very best normal age students.' — Arts

Not only has "higher motivation" been one of the greatest assets of these students, staff were also impressed by their "conscientious" and "hard working" approaches towards studies. Because of their "maturity" and "life experiences" these students are often "more confident", able to "see the course in a broader perspective", and are more "communicative" than the normal age students. A respondent from the faculty of Law wrote:

> "Mature age students add variety to comments made in Tutorials. Often their experiences of life and of the 'outside world' clarify problems for younger students. . ."

Another from the faculty of Arts noted:

> "Mature age students are more confident and more articulate. Some are 'set' in their ideas, but most can raise the level of discussion (especially in literature tutorials) by communicating more mature attitudes based on living."

However, some respondents argued that the experience-related area might favour mature age students *initially*, but the advantage would be offset later by normal age students. As one respondent put it:

> "Usually better at the beginning when knowledge of the readings etc. can be less important than contributions based on experience. Contributions tend to fall off as all the students become more familiar with the subject matter and the younger people pick up confidence within the group." — Law —

Still others did not think mature age students perform as well as normal age students *initially* because they are "uncertain of standard, and often over-cautious". One respondent commented:

> "It takes time to get them to feel confident enough to assert themselves. They suffer real fear that the bright young things from school MUST be cleverer. They learn!" — Arts —

Conceding the possibility that there is a tendency for mature age students to choose the subjects or courses which are akin to their experiences in real life and/or job-related and, most important of all, are within their intellectual capability, one must also allow for the fact that these students are relatively inexperienced or "rusty," as some respondents put it, in a formal educational institution. Conflicting views, therefore, have a broader base and stem from the contrasts between mature age students and normal age students, the classroom situation, and how the corresponding staff define the term "performance".

Different levels of performance are also reflected in different subjects and courses which may be seen as another area of variation:

> "Maturity improves willingness to participate but does not necessarily reflect intellectual ability. In Accounting subjects maturity tends to go hand in hand with business experience which is a distinct advantage (relative to full-time normal students who have no business experience)." — Economics and Politics —

> "Quite simply, their experience enables them to respond much more fully to literature and social/historical matters." – Arts –

> "Anthropology is often difficult for 18 year-olds to adjust to; this difficulty is probably a function of lack of experience. Mature-age students, with greater experience, give the younger students confidence in what is presented in lectures and tutorials by being able to relate it to their own lives." — Arts —

While the performance of mature age students remains excellent in the fields akin to their own lives and/or professional experiences, they tend to have greater difficulty, more than their normal age counterparts, in coping with the academic programmes which are essentially technical in nature and require experiences of a different type which may be remote to their scope of familiarity. As one staff member from the faculty of Science wrote:

> "Their questions waste class time, because their questions arise from a lack of knowledge of HSC material which normal students have."

Another staff member from the same faculty wrote:

> "They are better in written or verbal communication. They are not so good in Statistics."

Science, however, is not the only faculty in which mature age students experience some problems in their learning. Some subjects and courses from other faculties have also presented similar type of problems to these students. One respondent from the faculty of Economics and Politics found that he "tends to spend more time with them (mature age students) on material of a technical nature." Another respondent from the faculty of Law wrote:

> "Main problem is getting some to learn "new language" of law and change existing "cognitive structure" to adapt to new concepts and analytical styles."

While "material of a technical nature" has been seen as an area with which mature age students find it difficult to cope, several staff have also expressed their concern over the actual presentation of essays and papers of these students. Although most of the respondents who were conscious of this problem generally agreed that mature age students tend to display a better English expression in their essays than the normal age students do, some respondents did not think the essays were satisfactory. It is interesting to note that most of the respondents who raised the issue have come from the faculty of Law, and more interesting is the fact that conflicting views emerged:

> "Essays *much* better; schools used to be able to teach grammar (English and French) as well as 'expression'." — Law —
>
> "Class performance better than essay. . ." — Law —
>
> "In particular, such students have a better grasp of the essentials of grammar. They reason better and, even if not initially good at expressing themselves, work at improving their oral and written work." — Law —
>
> "Mature age students find it more difficult to synthesize a large amount of material, especially for examinations and generally for essays." — Law —

The fact that most of the comments came from the faculty of Law is highly significant. It is not known whether mature age students have had as much experience in essay writing as normal age students have prior to their entry to the University. The lack of practice in essay writing would certainly create problems for some students, particularly when synthesis of a large amount of material is required. The technical nature of the Law language that calls forth a special type of presentation of materials in the essays may also be a problem for mature age students.

Where mature age students do show poor performance in examinations, the reason may be their relative incapability in handling tests and examinations within the academic programmes. In fact, the lack of experience in tests and examinations was thought by some staff to have a depressing effect on their overall performance which otherwise has been outstanding. Extensive comments were made on this aspect by staff of all faculties who were very much aware of the problem. As one respondent from the faculty of Economics and Politics pointed out:

> "Examination technique often rusty, bringing down their average performances, which would be much higher if assessed purely on the basis of project work, tutorial papers, essays, etc."

Another respondent commented:

> "Mature age students are often better than their formal marks imply, simply because they find formal examinations more difficult than younger students do." — Science —

From the faculty of Law, one staff member wrote:

> ". . . Performance in examinations and tests sometimes less satisfactory: mature agers seem more prone to exam. nerves."

Although different individual students of different courses may react differently to the system, the failure to cope with this part of the academic programmes is often attributed to the individual student's inability to adjust to the programmes, rather than to the programmes themselves creating the problems for these students. It was not through lack of intellectual ability that mature age students performed poorly in the examinations, but, as most of the respondents maintained, lack of experience, psychological preparation, and test-taking skills. However, no suggestion was made to remedy this problem, nor has the system itself been questioned.

7.7 *Special problems*

Subjective interpretation of students' behaviours often have a significant bearing on staff's attitudes toward the students. Interpersonal relationship, in this respect, tends to be a function of perception and expectation of how various roles are played in individual circumstances. Therefore when conflicts develop between two or more roles, not only do personal problems arise for the individuals involved, but also strains in interpersonal relationship are likely to occur.

Because of the wide range of experience the respondents have, their observations vary greatly. It is therefore difficult, if not dangerous, to characterize mature age students on the basis of some acute views offered by these respondents.

Most of the problems experienced by mature age students have been due to the difficulty of reconciling the various roles they play while studying. Many academic staff pointed out that economic and social roles of mature age students often take precedence over the role of students, and this often adversely affects their study. Time, family, and work pressures are the commonest source of problems observed by the respondents:

> Perhaps one needs to be more receptive to pressures of work and family life as they impinge on mature age students." — Arts —
>
> ". . . due to the fact that many are part-time and have job pressures which place constraints on time available for study, assignments etc." — Economics and Politics —
>
> "More often than other students they are absent from lectures, tutorials, and etc. because of illness of children or other family reasons." — Arts —
>
> "Have few in our faculty, but in first year they seem to have personal problems and/or clashes with outside activities and responsibilities which need special attention." — Engineering —

And comments specially made on women with children:

> ". . . Sometimes difficult to find suitable times for lectures and tutorials, especially if a mixture of mothers-of-school-children and full-time-jobbers has to be held together." — Arts —
>
> "Obviously women with children and household duties do at times have special problems, but they tend to try to hide them to the extent that percentage-wise they don't seem to ask for special consideration (and even then are reluctant to disclose details) more often than other students." — Arts —

Missing classes, applying for the extension of time for their essays and assignments, unable to "attend specified test date", "problems with tutorial allocation", ill-prepared for their classes, and "see them outside prescribed time", are a few of the common "symptoms" shown by mature age students as the result of roles conflicts. Sympathy was expressed among the respondents; so was irritation, although the later was relatively rare.

Unique problems related to a wide range of individual students were commented on by the academic staff. Often the problems have a psychological root in these students' needs for recognition and acceptance, as well as the anxiety in an attempt to relate themselves to the academic environment. Frequently, the role of a student is not successfully played out by an individual, resulting in a lapse into roles external to the academic environment which can sometimes be irritating to both the academic staff and the other students. Dominating tutorial group, challenging tutors and/or lecturers, anxious to prove themselves, result-conscious, are few of the examples which can be traced back to the problems discussed above.

While some academic staff have the "good fortune" of being able to monitor the problems and use them to their own advantage and to the benefit of their classes, others are not so "lucky". One "fortunate" staff member wrote a lengthy comment:

> "I would be really unhappy if I had no mature age students. They sit near the front in lectures and I find that I soon identify the bright one and use him/her to monitor the progress of my lecture . . . whether I am going too fast or audible etc. Mature age students interrupt with questions and never, in my experience, chatter to their neighbour during lectures. They are rewarding to teach and inspire one to do better." — Science —

Another respondent wrote:

> "They can be excellently used to stimulate discussion especially once they understood that over-activity will not be appreciated." — Economics and Politics—

Those who were not so "lucky" wrote:

> "Their background knowledge of academic subjects tends to become vague. They have a tendency to 'ride hobby horses' (comment applies particularly to older mature age students)." — Engineering —

And another one:

> "Occasionally show up my ignorance in class." — Law —

Students who are "result conscious" can sometimes present problems not only to the academic staff, but also to themselves as well. Some examples:

> "They often seem more eager to prove themselves . . . therefore more pressured by esssays . . . Overtly more result conscious." — Arts —
>
> "The reservation here is to do with the kind of anxiety mature age students commonly feel about assessed work, which leads them not only into an excessive sensitivity to the mark received, but sometimes into doggedness and 'safe' opinions too . . ." — Arts —
>
> "Extra work in positive sense as they expect high standard from teacher. Extra work in bad sense as they sometimes expect personal consideration and can be very touchy about assessment." — Arts —

A significant number of respondents noted a peculiar phenomenon in which mature age students tend to set a higher standard for themselves and generally expect a higher standard of teaching from the academic staff.

Many respondents were inclined to explain such phenomenon in terms of the higher motivation and generally stronger intellectual curiosity which mature age students tend to show in their study. Because of their demand for high standards, most of the academic staff found themselves involved in extra work:

> "Mature age students are more likely to request clarification of matters not understood in lectures and to this extent involve me in extra work . . ." — Science —
>
> ". . . some have devoured reading list at such rate that I can hardly keep up with them. . ." — Arts —
>
> "Much more demanding about sources of ideas, reference lists, keep me much more on my toes." — Arts —
>
> "More intellectually demanding so a problem of 'levels' arises . . . i.e. selecting a level/combining levels to cope with the added enthusiasm and 'curiousity'." — Law —

The most typical situation of all arises when academic staff feel that they have to be better prepared for their classes in case they are challenged:

> "I feel I have to be better prepared for tutorials and lectures since many mature age students challenge quickly anything that seems vague, dubious or generally not backed up with strong arguments." — Arts —

Although extra work is involved, the majority of staff did not regard this as a problem. In fact most of them considered it to be reflective of students' greater interest in the subjects. Some academic staff took it as an "exciting challenge"; others thought it had a generally beneficial effect on the whole class.

Students who have troubles in coping with academic programmes because of weak background can be just as demanding. Typically, these students lack confidence and experience in their study, and frequently are anxious and uncertain of the standard expected of them. They often need more supervision, additional prescription of material, and full psychological support reassurance. Several staff commented that these students tend to consume a lot of their time, and often require more individual attention. One respondent wrote:

> "Mature age students typically are less experienced in requirements of studying and therefore require more time, more reassurance, and guidance on what is required them." — Economics and Politics —

Another respondent wrote:

> ". . . they are less certain of themselves and lack confidence in their ability sometimes. One spends much more time with them in private discussion on the course. They are not prepared to overlook so much as their classification of trivia." — Science —

However, a comment was made by a respondent who saw the situation quite differently:

> "Effort of individual mature age student depends a lot on their circumstances . . . family, job, outside activities etc. etc. A few put in only a calculated minimum effort (i.e. as little as they can get away with and still survive)." — Economics and Politics —

Although the experiences of mature age students enhance their ". . . capacity to organize and articulate ideas . . .", they also provide the bases for some students to resist new ideas which may seem foreign to their

cognition. Several comments were made on the "inflexibility" of mature age students' mental attitude towards their academic subjects:

> "They try harder but may be hampered by their previous knowledge, i.e. unwilling to accept the newer viewpoint offered them." —Science—
>
> "I come across the odd mature age student who fails hopelessly not as a result of lack of motivation but being incapable of thinking as social scientists do. . ." — Economics and Politics —
>
> ". . . some are less flexible in their thinking and tend to be more conservative." — Arts —

The evaluation of mental attitude is essentially subjective. Whether the "inflexibility" is due to age and maturity, or simply a function of disparity between the experiences of academic staff in the subject and the experiences of these students in real life remains debatable.

One's attitude, judgment, and expectations of others often have a significant bearing in a classroom situation. Mutual dissatisfaction and conflicts in roles over a period of time may frequently provide the ground for confrontation between some academic staff and some mature age students. Although such cases are relatively rare, their importance should not be overlooked. As one respondent related his experience:

> "There is a tendency of *some* students (especially greater than 40 years old) to try to 'catch the teaching staff out' in some inaccuracy in lectures or prac. notes; this can strain relations and alienate them from both teaching staff and other students." — Science —

Another respondent wrote:

> "Some are very, very good (the tutor learns from them). A few are hostile, cynical, passive, uncooperative . . . especially those just getting a paper qualification and occasionally, a public servant on education leave." — Economics and Politics —

7.8 *Conclusion*

The statistical evidence revealed by several factors analysed in this study indicated strong support among academic staff for the entrance of mature age students to higher education. The positive attitudes of academic staff, substantiated their favourable comments on mature age students, contributed further strength to the findings. Although the responses tend to vary from one faculty to another, the functional differences attributable to age, level of appointment, and sex of the respondents are perhaps not as highly relevant as the functional differences attributable to the individual academic staff member's experiences with mature age students.

One of the most significant aspects revealed in this study is that full HSC is no longer regarded by the majority of academic staff as the essential selection procedure for the admission of mature age students to higher education. The fact that a wide range of procedures other than HSC were favoured not only indicates that some alternative methods are preferred, but also indicates the academic staff's recognition of the academic value mature age students' experiences.

While most of the academic staff agree that mature age students tend to perform better than normal age students in fields akin to their own experiences, they are also aware that the areas which require techniques and

experiences of different kind, such as the presentation of essays and examinations, tend to depress the overall performance of mature age students. A depressed performance in essays and examinations, and its subsequent detrimental effect on the overall performance, however, have a wider educational implication than the mere psychological problems of fear and confrontation. The fact that distinction can be made among class performance, essays, and examinations, and the fact that discrepancy in performance and achievement in these areas can be attributed to the degree of maturity and the relevance of experience has reflected the inadequacy of the existing assessment system to neutralize the problem of such differences which characterize the system itself, rather than the individual students' (both old and young) intellectual ability.

Although academic achievement depends greatly on the individual student's effort and motivation, consideration must also be given to those who fail, not through the lack of intellectual ability, but through the lack of adaptability to the system. Anxiety, frustration, and the subsequent poor performance are often the results of individual students' inability to reconcile their high level of expectation of themselves with their personal problems, such as lack of time and experience, family and job pressures, which they encounter in their study.

While some mature age students have done remarkably well under similar circumstances, comments from the academic staff indicate that failure of some mature age students in adjusting themselves to the various roles not only contributes significantly to the poor performance in some part of students' academic programmes, but also tends to create some problems for the staff. Although most of the academic staff have accepted the problems which are of academic relevance as being part of a student's learning processes, the problems which affect the interpersonal relationship between staff and students are often beyond their scope to control.

The most important aspect of the whole study has been highlighted by the respondents' comments on mature age students. The inadequacy of the existing system in providing means to assist those students who are in need of help often perpetuates the problems of the students. While students are expected to be better prepared, for *what* they are better prepared frequently provides one with an equally valid ground to review the whole system. The inflexibility of the academic programmes in accommodating these students presents just as many problems as the inflexibility of these students in adjusting to the academic programmes, and frequently, the two are reciprocal and mutually reinforcing. In view of the future trend of mature age students' entrance to higher education, it is both important and relevant to review the existing system and the present academic programmes in terms of students' needs so that improvement may be made to accommodate future mature age students.

HIGHER EDUCATION ADVISORY AND RESEARCH UNIT

STAFF QUESTIONNAIRE CONCERNING MATURE AGE STUDENTS

Please respond by writing the appropriate number in the boxes on the right hand side of the page.

1. What percentage of mature age students (i.e. 25 and over) would you estimate there are in your courses? ☐

   (1) 0-5% (2) 6-10% (3) 11-20% (4) 21-30% (5) Over 30%

The next two questions concern Minimum Qualifications and Selection Procedures for entry.

2. Some institutions have relaxed the MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS needed for mature age students to be eligible for entry. Please indicate which of the following MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS you would support for mature age entrants into your faculty.

   (1) Full HSC (i.e. no relaxation)

   (2) Part HSC (at least half)

   (3) Part HSC (less than half) ☐

   (4) No HSC

3. Which one of the following SELECTION PROCEDURES would you support for mature age applicants entering your faculty?

   (1) The normal formula based on HSC

   (2) The normal formula with points added for mature age students

   (3) A score based on part HSC

   (4) Special tests

   (5) An interview

   (6) Work reference or experience

   (7) Open entry ("first come, first serve") ☐

   (8) Open entry with a ballot if the number of applicants exceeds the number of places

   (9) A combination of some of the above. Please specify. _____

   (10) Other, please specify _____

4. If the demand for places in your faculty was greater than the number of places available, which of the following guidelines for the availability of places for mature age applicants would you support:

   (1) No distinction should be made between mature age and normal age applicants

   (2) Preference should be given to normal age applicants ☐

   (3) There should be a separate quota for mature age applicants

   (4) Preference should be given to mature age applicants

   (5) Other, please specify

Note: If you have answered (3), please specify the percentage of places that you would reserve for mature age applicants. _____

5. How do you rate the contribution to tutorials etc., of mature age students compared to normal age students in your faculty?

   (1) Much worse

   (2) A bit worse

   (3) About the same

   (4) A Bit better ☐

   (5) Much better

   Any other comments _____

6. How do you rate the overall performance of mature age students (exams, essays, etc.) compared to normal age students in your faculty?

   (1) Much worse
   (2) A bit worse
   (3) About the same
   (4) A bit better
   (5) Much better

   Any other comments _____

7. How do you rate the influence of mature age students of your course as a whole?

   (1) Very negative
   (2) Negative
   (3) No influence
   (4) Positive
   (5) Very positive

   Any other comments _____

8. Have you found that mature age students request (or expect) special treatment - such as extension of time on essays or assignments etc. - because of difficulties they experience as mature age students?

   (1) Yes (2) No (3) Don't know

   If "yes", would you consider the frequencies of such request

   (1) Much higher
   (2) A bit higher
   (3) The same
   (4) A bit lower
   (5) Much lower

   Than the similar requests, based on different reasons, of normal age students?

9. Do mature age students present any special problems for you as a lecturer? e.g. Do they involve you in extra work?

   (1) Yes (2) No (3) Don't know. Please comment _____

SOME DESCRIPTIVE DETAILS

10. Your faculty
    (1) Arts
    (2) Economics politics
    (3) Engineering
    (4) Law
    (5) Science

11. Level of appointment
    (1) Professor
    (2) Associate Professor or Reader
    (3) Senior Lecturer
    (4) Lecturer
    (5) Senior Tutor
    (6) Tutor

12. Sex
    (1) Male
    (2) Female

13. Age (in years)

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP

HIGHER EDUCATION ADVISORY AND RESEARCH UNIT
Monash University, Clayton, Victoria 3168.

CHAPTER 8

Problems, Costs and Benefits

Nigel Lawler and Terry Hore

8.1 *Introduction*

This chapter reports on the results of a telephone survey conducted at Monash University in 1979. It was a follow up survey of mature age students who had entered the first year of a bachelor's degree at Monash University in 1978 and indicated on an enrolment questionnaire their willingness to be contacted about their progress. The survey attempted to gauge the problems, costs and benefits encountered during the first year and a half of university.

8.2 *Survey method*

The method used was telephone interviews, lasting from 25 minutes to 80 minutes, structured around a set of questions probing general areas in an attempt to elicit very personal responses. The telephone interview was seen as a compromise between the economic demands of in-depth, face-to-face interviews and an impersonal statistical questionnaire which may have blurred the subtle variations in respondents' experience. There were no cases of refusal, and indeed most people were enthusiastic about the opportunity to discuss their experiences; usually it was a matter of limiting the time not extending it. The students were pleased that the University was interested in their progress and opinions, with nearly all asking for information about publication of the findings of the survey.

The telephone survey was found to be an effective method of contacting people, where it was possible to arrange another time if the present one was inconvenient, or to receive re-direction information for people who had moved. Due to the direct contact of this method it was possible to contact 50 of the planned 51 for the sample, leaving one to be substituted from the relevant area.

Given the students' enthusiasm, it was felt that the prime quality the interviewers required was the ability to establish rapport with the student and the sensitivity to recognize and respond to the subtle nuances in an answer which are so often the key to the true significance.

Trends that are significant are not so in a statistical sense, but in more of the depth of feeling and experience within the responses. Numbers are used, but only to draw responses together at times into a composite picture.

The students in this survey were grouped according to the framework used for the 1978 enrolment questionnaire, which categorized the students

according to two self-classification items: Tertiary Intentions, which grouped students according to whether the respondent had already completed tertiary qualifications; had previously attended but discontinued a tertiary course; had always intended doing tertiary study; or had never, until recently, considered the idea. The second item, designated Job Relatedness, grouped respondents according to whether they needed qualifications for a promotion; whether a degree would be useful in their present job; whether they thought a degree would enable them to change to a better, more satisfying position; whether they intended to use the qualification to facilitate a re-entry to the workforce; and a final "other" grouping to accommodate those not covered by the preceding. (See Chapter 6.)

This framework was used partly for convenience and partly to see what kinds of correlations emerged between these entering characteristics and experience within the institution. The results of the survey do not really discriminate these entering characteristics clearly, which may be due to the small numbers involved in the sample. It is more likely that this is a reflection of the fact that original motivation and educational experience are only a part of the factors affecting students' experience at university. In the light of this survey it can be hypothesized that a more effective framework describing the progress of a student would relate present motivation and future intentions to different variables that affect these, such as family, employment, the academic institution, academic standards.

8.3 *Survey sample*

The survey was of a representative sample of those who responded to the enrolment questionnaire in 1978, and was composed of 51 students. Of these 43 were in the faculty of Arts, 4 in the faculty of Economics and Politics, 2 in the faculties of Arts and Law, 1 in the faculty of Law, and 1 in the faculty of Science. There were over twice as many part-time students as full-time (36 p/t, 15 f/t), and three times the number of females as males (39 F, 12 M). Their age range was from 27-57, of which 86 per cent were over 30; so that the group was definitely mature age, and not high school deferred entry or university stop-outs (taking leave of absence during a course).

The Tertiary Intentions classification was very evenly split at both ends, with 18 having completed some tertiary qualifications and 21 having never considered the idea of university study until recently (with four having previously discontinued and eight always having intended to attend university). Similarly, the item Job Relatedness was split in extremes, with 20 hoping to change to a better more satisfying job and 14 grouped under 'Other' (with two requiring the qualifications for promotion, eight feeling it to be useful in the present job, and seven hoping to re-enter the workforce).

On the surface these data draw a composite picture of a mature age student as female, enrolled in Arts part-time. It is often inferred from this that Arts part-time is done in one's spare time and is a waste of time. This myth, with its connotation of intellectual titillation instead of soap operas, is both wrong and dangerous, for it undervalues the effort involved and the academic and personal achievements attained.

In trying to draw an overall picture of mature age students, responsibilities is the key word. Mature age students generally spread themselves, at

times very thinly, over at least three demanding areas: work, family and study. Of the 51 interviewed, 30 were presently employed; while the majority of the remainder were employed in the business of running a home and family (as were many also employed outside the home). It is also worth remembering that those working would on average hold responsible positions entailing a fair degree of personal commitment, in contrast to younger students working to earn spending money.

The degree of strain involved varies considerably. For a few it was a matter of extending themselves after relinquishing certain responsibilities: "my children had all grown up, and I needed something to stop me stagnating intellectually and personally (female, Arts, p/t)". Others were studying within a working environment: "I'm teaching, the timetable there is very flexible and the principal very understanding so that I'm not really pressured (female, Arts, p/t)"; "I'm forever rushing out of a classroom and into a lecture, and then back again . . . there are always so many things to do for school, it's never-ending (female, Arts, p/t)". And finally there are those quite clearly struggling against business, financial or personal pressures to radically alter their lot: "I work as a night nurse to support myself and my child . . . I'm on night shift every weekend, studying when I can there and when I come off duty . . . and then off to lectures on Monday morning having had little or no sleep all weekend, every weekend (female, Arts, p/t)".

So, the commitment is there for mature age students; but it must be balanced against many other very real responsibilities. All that can really be said of the average mature age student is that he or she possesses a multifaceted personality which is willing to deal with a variety of conflicting responsibilities.

8.4 *Problems associated with mature age study at university*

Age is rarely the only factor involved in difficulties mature age students face at university; usually it is some combination of age-related factors: that the student works, has children, is married, has an established social life. While all these things affect students' experience, their relative importance varies for different people.

In an attempt to do more than describe the responses of students in the survey, the range of problems they articulated will be treated under three area headings: Institutional, Academic, and Personal. These are three interlocking elements which make up the functioning system of university life. By focusing on the system within which the students operate it is hoped that their responses provide something more definitional; the common experience within certain situations or areas of activity.

8.4.1 *Institutional domain*

a) timetables

The dominant problems students indicated they confronted were within the institutional area. Of these, difficulties with timetables figured most significantly. Forty of the 51 students interviewed spoke of severe timetable restrictions, pressures and constraints, to the point where 18 of these had had their subject choices determined in part by the times subjects

were offered.

On the Job Relatedness classification, an employment measure, all groups except those studying to facilitate a re-entry to work experienced major difficulties with timetables. Those hoping to re-enter the workforce tended to be older and so had older children. Obviously they were not working at present, and so overall had far fewer demands on their time.

While timetables may seem far down on the hierarchy of educational variables, they are most significant for mature age students. Timetables are significant because they, more than any other single factor, treat the commodity which defines the mature age student situation: time. Time available to fulfill all the demands coming from the different areas of a mature age student's life.

b) environment

Almost half of those interviewed indicated that they had had difficulty with the institutional environment. Such things as general orientation to the University, participation in the social/extra curricular life of the University, library difficulties with borrowing and returning books, loneliness and then dislocation from year to year as friends and acquaintances acquired differing timetables; all these greatly increased the tensions involved in returning to study.

Whether these proved to be temporary, such as general orientation or initial loneliness, or residual, as library problems and non-participation in university life were, they are all a function of time. Mature age students overwhelmingly lack the time to be involved or to use the existing facilities which are geared to the more leisurely full-time student.

Students overcame these difficulties in a number of ways. The organizations that do cater for mature age and part-time students appeared very successful in giving assistance and support. The Part-Timers/Mature Age Students Club provided personal contact with others in a similar situation, or experience of that situation, and was clearly able to provide a range of personal support services through the avenue of social/informal contact. The campus child-minding co-operative (SPAM) gave students some flexibility in timetable choices knowing that children could be minded on campus. These self-help organizations operated very successfully within their sphere of influence, but could never involve the high percentage of mature age students who either lack the knowledge of their existence or the time to use them.

Throughout the discussion of institutional difficulties, time has been the determining factor. This in itself points to the centre of mature age study at university: that the overwhelming majority of mature age students are effectively part-time students. While a clear majority of mature age students are part-time, there is a significant group of those technically full-time who, because of outside commitments, are so only in the sense of academic workload. For example, it became clear in the interviews that four or five of those full-time were actually three-quarter-time to qualify for financial assistance. This hidden percentage of effective part-timers takes the ratio to something like four part-time to one full-time.

This unstartling but quite useful re-definition of mature age students as part-timers enables their status to be accurately evaluated, to understand and appreciate the pressures upon them and their achievements, and to distinguish their common elements. It is worth noting here that the part-time status mature age students is evenly split between those who attend early in the day and those attending late afternoon and, where possible, evening classes. This clear split creates two quite separate groups with differing needs.

8.4.2 *Academic domain*

a) preparation

On the academic cost-benefit scale some interesting problems arise. Students were asked a question which sought to evaluate how prepared they had been for the volume of work. Interestingly, the group who had previous tertiary qualifications appeared less prepared than those who had in the past discontinued (who were well prepared), those who had always intended and those new to the idea of tertiary education. Again this indicates that academic experience is not the key (which is backed by the very good performance of those admitted under the Early Leavers Scheme at Monash, and mature age students generally). It appears relevant that this same group, with previous qualifications, also had the highest incidence of business pressures, which they had probably anticipated and so had hoped to limit their study commitments accordingly.

b) academic skills

Specific problems with study did not rate as an overwhelming problem. In fact the whole range of academic problems were less than timetabling difficulties, with 40 indicating timetable problems and 22 study difficulties. This is an interesting reflection as one would expect any group of first year students, mature age or not, to have a fair degree of difficulty with academic adjustment. It could of course be possible that the degree of difficulty encountered with study by the fewer number would outweigh a slight inconvenience experienced by the many, but the tenor of the responses do not indicate this.

The major difficulty in this area was that of lack of background for a subject undertaken. This was particularly true of statistical components for commercial and social science subjects, where the student was often relying on a very shaky grounding in mathematics which had further diminished over time. It appears that at times there is quite a large discrepancy between the practical requirements for a course and the official prerequisites or course description in the handbook. This discrepancy affects all students, but particularly mature age students. Because most mature age students are part-time they are less able to make peer contact and attain informal guidance and tuition, at least in the all-important early stages of the year.

Problems mature age students had with study skills and techniques were clustered around difficulties with essays and academic standards and expectations. The comments of the six students who had difficulties here took the form of complaints about lack of direction from tutors. What was lacking

primarily as adequate feedback about essays: "I don't have the basic educational skills such as taking notes, essay writing and using references, and I get very little feedback on how I'm going (female, Arts, p/t)."

Running through these comments, and those that were favourable, was the clear link between comments on essays and information on standards and expectations: "When I got my first essay back there was little more than a mark and random comments . . . there is very rarely anything that helps you to improve (male, Arts, p/t)." It is generally accepted that mature age students have high need to achieve (to justify at least to themselves the time and effort spent in returning to study). From both the favourable and unfavourable comments about feedback on essays and assignments it was clear mature age students place very high importance on doing well, knowing why they attained what they did, and how to do better. This appears to be a distinctive mature age trait (not exclusive of course), and is a product of high achievement needs and the practical experience as adults of how learning takes place.

It is interesting to note that by far the majority of students answered favourably on the subject of study skills. This confidence appeared to be the result some form of previous experience, though not necessarily within the education stem: "I didn't have study problems, I had experience writing through the work I'd done (female, Arts, p/t)." Adult HSC helped many, as did contact with study through children, relatives or friends.

Although Monash runs a special entry scheme (Early Leavers Scheme) for those without HSC, this numbers only 10 per cent of all mature age students (32 in 1977). The remainder (271 in 1977) enter through HSC having experience with study. In general, mature age students appear to experience difficulties in much the same areas as normal age students. Investigating mature age students' academic preparedness and progress should probably not be carried out in isolation from an investigation of the skills and techniques of students generally. The problems of mature age students regarding study seem to be but intensive and overt examples of a pervasive trauma in making the transition to university study.

c) Academic environment

Several respondents expressed concern with problems of concentration (as a factor of age and absence from study) and general attitudinal difficulty in orientating themselves to study: "I simply don't think quickly, as quickly as lectures require or the conversation in tutes; it's a matter of age (female, Arts, p/t)"; "Yes, my major problem coping with study is that I'm very undisciplined (female, Arts, p/t)". While these comments came from only two or three they must certainly be significant concerns of adults contemplating the return to study. For this reason it is relevant to mention that usually what intellectual disorientation did take place was more than off-set by the advantages of practical life experience and the personal immediacy of what was being studied. It is also relevant to point out, as several respondents did, that younger students often experience similar feelings of inadequacy and comparable difficulty with concentration due to distractions particular to their stage in life.

Another area of interest was this advantage mature age students in particular have through their personal "real-life" experience. This appears in both a maturer attitude to study and an understanding of the practical application theories being discussed. Several commented that study gave a broader and deeper intellectual understanding of areas they were actually working in: "Working as a nurse I find so much of my work is really to do with people and human relations . . . uni. has helped me to understand and cope better (female, Arts, p/t)."

A knowledge of how things being studied operated outside university proved to be a frustration at times as well as an advantage. Frustration occurred when theory diverged markedly from practice as the student knew it, or when emphasis was placed on theory to the detriment of practice (as felt by the student): "I find micro-economics very theoretical and very difficult because it's so far from the real world (male, Economics, p/t)", "the course lacks real world relevance (male, Arts, f/t)". It appeared that whether or not a student's personal experience could be made relevant depended on his or her approach and the teaching skills of the staff member rather than curriculum.

In this area of teaching skills of staff, mature age students again act as a focusing device for all students. Problems articulated were lack of feedback, non-availability staff, poorly organized and delivered lectures, and tutorials conducted without sensitive guidance. With regard to this last point on tutorials, many respondents recognized a tendency among some mature age students to dominate, but it was equally clear that tutors relied heavily on mature age students, and their interest and confidence, to keep a tutorial going. The teaching needs of mature age students appear little different to those of all students. Where they do vary is that perhaps their particular attributes of high motivation and practical experience tend to place a more intense pressure on teaching staff. It may be that this pressure productively clarifies those elements necessary for fostering the learning environment.

The one problem mentioned most frequently (ten students), and forcefully, in this area was difficulties with the library. Respondents criticized the availability of books through a range of specific complaints centering on borrowing rights felt to be discriminatory to part-timers. The predominance of over-night loans (and consequent heavy-fines) creates a major problem for mature age students/part-timers, which severely affects their life as students. The necessity of returning books when a student may not be scheduled to attend at all that day, lack of time to use the library effectively, and limited numbers of texts in high demand are major problems.

Clearly the library has a difficult task, and attempts to reach the best compromise by getting the texts back in circulation as quickly as possible. From the comments of several students it was clear they had gained satisfaction through approaching library staff and arranging an extension on a personal basis. Others had not thought of this or had been unsuccessful. There was a general feeling that there should be a more formal system for arranging informally for the extension of loans upon reasonable request.

d) personal relationships

In the sphere of personal relationships there was little evidence of conflict with younger students or staff. Despite the age difference with "normal" age students the majority of mature age students recognized little difference in regard to work. The most common response was that all students were equals: "We are all in the same boat, and have a common interest (male, Economics, f/t)". This egalitarianism was often qualified: "I work well with the younger students, but we don't mix socially (female, Arts, p/t)"; "I find the younger students stimulating, and cooperative, but I mix socially with students of my own age (female, Arts, p/t)".

Almost all of the comments at least stressed friendliness between younger and older students. Some saw the potential for conflict which usually called for some sort of reassessment of roles: "the younger girls especially saw me as a mum-figure I think, and were reticent to relate to me, but I was able to deal with that and we all ended up getting on well (female, Arts, f/t)". There were a number of comments enunciating mature age students' greater talkativeness, founded on confidence and maturity, previous experience, or need to achieve: "the younger students are not forthcoming, in some tutes the mature age students carry the tute (female, Arts, p/t)".

There was an awareness that this interest in being involved could lead to competition and conflict. Some saw this as a result of younger students' shyness and immaturity, while others recognized the part they had to play in establishing a rapport; usually through trying not to dominate: "I'm a little overwhelming, I have to watch that (female, Arts, p/t)".

Personal relationships with staff were similarly positive. Qualities praised were approachability, sympathetic appreciation of the demands upon a mature age student, and willingness to help through extending deadlines on essays and the like. Nineteen students made very definite statements about the sympathetic help they had received from staff, while only two were prepared to make their criticism all-inclusive. The remainder were generally complimentary, and philosophic about the isolated case of uncooperativeness: "I've had one or two crook tutors, who were uncompromising on deadlines and generally unhelpful, but that's just a matter of personalities; the rest have been good (female, Arts, p/t)". It is interesting to note that several students commended staff personally and yet criticized their professional teaching capabilities. It was also not uncommon for students to respond by saying that they had not needed to approach staff for assistance particular to their situation as mature age students.

There was an awareness in many of the replies that age was an important factor in student-staff relations. This could be very positive, as comparable age often meant similar experiences and attitudes. Many mature age students felt a personal affinity with staff that presumably many younger people would not. Age was also seen as a negative factor, as this identification with staff could often alienate younger less confident students. Several respondents indicated that they had also had difficulties with tutors younger than themselves; interestingly it was the tutor who experienced the difficulty: "I have found a couple of youngish male tutors antagonistic to mature age women — probably their own identity crisis (female, Arts, f/t)".

Some mature age students were also of the opinion that older staff members sometimes felt uncomfortable dealing with their contemporaries rather than young students straight from school.

The major problems within the academic domain do seem to be with orientation and assimilation into university life, and less with study techniques methods. Mature age students are perhaps little different from N-types, except in their opportunity to take advantage of existing facilities. Whatever the attributes of N-types, there can be no doubt of the seriousness of mature students' commitment to study, their aspirations to do well, and their willingness to work. Where they do have problems is in the limited time they can spend on campus. Many are simply not at university enough to make the contact which will enable them to judge what is required, to use the academic facilities of library and staff, or to establish contact with fellow students. Consideration needs to be given to adapting the present structure of academic life to accommodate more readily those people who literally rush in and rush out.

8.4.3 *Personal domain*

The situation within the personal sphere of the survey reflects a similar pattern: a lack of major attitudinal problems in favour of pressures of time and responsibilities.

a) Marital and family

There was a remarkably small incidence of conflict in the home caused through mature age students studying. In the light of the pressures of time and tensions involved in meeting conflicting responsibilities it would not be unexpected that mature age students' home life would suffer significantly. Of the 51 students interviewed, only 12 spoke of difficulties caused through study. Within this group of 12 the degree of severity varied considerably.

There was evidence of tension due to lack of understanding of the pressures involved in study, and hostilities and resentment at the time taken up with study: "my husband likes the idea of me studying but doesn't seem to realize it takes time and hard work; he still expects me to have the time to do things that I used to (female, Arts, p/t)"; "my wife resents the time I have to spend studying . . . I feel I have to devote more time to my family (male, Economics, p/t)"; "my husband is perfectly happy with me studying as long as it doesn't interfere at all with my household duties . . . I have to study after I've cooked the dinner and cleaned up and by then I'm always so tired (female, Arts, p/t)". These pressures reflect a range of responses from those that cover a quite natural and justified domestic wish that a family spend time together to those revealing selfishness and an uncompromisingly narrow opinion of what constitutes family life.

Marital tension was the direct cause of four of the students' problems. In each case the student felt his or her spouse was threatened by their involvement with university: "my husband feels threatened by the new ideas I meet at uni., he accuses me of becoming a radical (female, Arts, f/t)"; "my husband feels threatened, he feels I should be at home with the three kids (female, Arts, p/t)". One women commented that at first her husband felt threatened

and resentful because he wanted to study too, and that once he was, the threat disappeared.

In only two cases had study contributed to a marriage breakup, and both were grateful for the influence of university: "uni. has speeded up the dissolving my marriage. It has been a good influence . . . it has enabled me to stand on my own two feet . . . as I became more independent and confident it brought out all the bad things which had always been there (female, Arts, p/t)"; "university helped me to understand my relationship with my husband . . . the problems were already there, but I was now able to talk about them . . . my husband resented it to begin with, but we both agreed it had to happen (female, Arts, f/t)".

By far the majority of students received support and encouragement from their immediate families. As with conflict, the degrees of support varied, with seven students replying that they received some kind of support if only a passive morale type. A further 17 experienced more definite support through shared household responsibilities, help with studying from children, definite encouragement from spouse and general enrichment of family life: "My husband encourages me, and my children enjoy the stimulation of taking part in uni. activities by 'helping' me with essays and talking about what I've done that day (female, Arts, p/t)"; "study has brought the family closer, and I'm pleased to be giving my child an image of a woman as more than just a mother"; "uni. has improved my relations with my husband, and they all understand when I give them a hard time around exams . . . it's all been very productive (female, Arts, p/t)".

These results diverge from what is often seen as the common knowledge about mature age study: that many families are in conflict and marriages threatened. The demands on a mature age student's time certainly place pressure on organizational abilities, while the influx of new ideas, attitudes, and roles compound the problem of functioning within an established pattern, be that a marriage, family, or job. The mature age student is not only much busier, but is busy with an activity which often leads to changes in personal attitudes and beliefs. While the potentially damaging consequences of these pressures cannot be ignored, the results from this survey emphasize the positive aspect of the domestic sphere. It can be hypothesized that the harmony and support found to exist within the family is a large contribution to the achievements of mature age students.

b) Social

It was common for the student to have experienced some form of antagonism outside the immediate family. A number had found friends quite mystified as to why they had returned to study, accepting the burden of academic studies and as a result neglecting other areas such as housekeeping and socializing. Two or three women in particular had found male friends and acquaintances openly hostile, and had been attacked on the basis of "playing intellectuals" or "depriving someone else of the place". It appears that there is often quite different social pressures operating for males, and that usually their studying was seen as practical and worthwhile because it was assumed to be vocationally directed.

c) Business

Pressures from business figured less significantly than may have been expected. Of the 51 interviewed only 16 indicated that the demands of employment conflicted with their study either regularly and/or severely. Those affected regularly, e.g. several teachers, were usually working to a rigid timetable and had little leeway for delays. A number of business people commented that while they may have had adequate time off allowed, the responsibilities of their position outweighed timetable plans. This meant that if a meeting came up, or they were sent interstate, the lecture was simply missed; there could be no question of deferring the business to suit the study.

On this issue of business pressures there appeared to be a relevant distinction among the Tertiary Intentions classification. Those with previous tertiary qualifications had a disproportionately high incidence of business study conflicts; they accounted for half of those experiencing difficulties in this area. There was a correlation, although weaker, on the Job Relatedness classification, those hoping to change to a more satisfying job, and those who thought a degree would be useful in their present job, with this previous qualifications grouping.

Presumably those experiencing the most business pressure were those employed in more responsible professional positions, where they were studying under their own initiative to improve themselves in their present job or to enable them to change jobs.

d) Financial

The area of finance displayed a similar pattern to that of domestic relations as money pressures were not seen as a major problem. Only 11 of the 51 interviewed maintained that they had experienced financial difficulties through returning to study. The question of financial strain is of course a difficult one, for strain is a relative term. What constitutes hardship to one person may not be to another. On the one hand there is the matter of what one has been used to, and whether there has been a major reduction in financial circumstances. There also appears to be the matter of benefits masking the cost. If one is benefitting from an activity, the financial cost, although definite, may not be deemed relevant, or significant.

The question on financial difficulties was handled with these things in mind. There was an attempt to ascertain to what degree and in what circumstances money worries were significantly associated with mature age study. In this way it was determined that of these 11, in fact 6 had experienced severe problems. At the other end of the scale, many replied to the question with references to cost of books, union fees and library fines. While these three items could easily amount to over two hundred dollars, nearly all were prepared to admit that this was not a financial burden.

The majority of those under financial strain were managing, but only by being highly organized and stretching themselves to the limit personally. Thus one student replied she was not having financial difficulties because she worked as a night nurse, coming straight to classes having had no sleep for 20 hours every weekend. This student was a single mother and simply

could not afford not to be working. Another student replied "I'm in a bad way anyway, I'm separated with three kids, I'm on NEAT [National Employment and Training System] and I'm used to living at that level (female, Arts, p/t)". A number were like this and quite philosophical about it: "I'm used to being poor (female, Arts, f/t)"; "I'm on TEAS [Tertiary Education Assistance Scheme], I'm used to being poor. I work at Christmas which means my mother takes care of my children for me (female, Arts, f/t)"; "I manage to scrape through on TEAS and supporting mother's benefit (female, Arts, f/t)".

All six of those classified as under severe strain were female and single/separated, and five were supporting children. Two of these six had been forced to defer their courses because of their financial situation: "I had to go back to work during the year to earn money having separated from my husband (female, Arts, f/t)"; "my financial problems began to wear me down . . ., I found I was only studying and looking after my son, I had no time for other responsibilities like painting the house, or to socialize (female, Arts, f/t)".

This last comment introduces an important issue concerning full-time study and finance. To be eligible for financial assistance under TEAS or NEAT a student must be classified as full-time. To do this no less than three-quarters a full year's load may be taken. This being the case, many of those few who are full-time are actually on three-quarter-time to qualify for assistance. This situation obviously places a large strain on those who opt to "study more and work less" and go full-time hoping to exist on the limited student allowance. This clearly is the major dilemma of the mature age student contemplating study and financial commitments: full-time study and allowance or part-time and employment. Both paths are fraught with unforeseeable dangers in the form of sickness, loneliness, loss of job, or any added responsibilities that make the burden too great.

Across the two classification groupings, Tertiary Intentions and Job Relatedness, the only relevant association was with the disproportionately high incidence of financial difficulties experienced by those who had never considered attending university until recently. Of the 11 students recorded as undergoing financial strain, 8 were from this group. There may be some associations between this group, their socio-economic background and their changing aspirations.

Unfortunately, a question on the potential impact of a re-introduction of fees was not originally included. During the process of the survey it was decided that the issue was important, as a measure of financial strain, and as a way relating the degree of this strain with personal commitment. Of the small number of people who were asked if fees would make a difference to their attending, and what would be the level of fees which would exclude them, nearly all answered with a conviction that university was worth paying for; that they did not intend to be excluded because of money; and was it possible that fees would be more than a two or three hundred dollars? Despite the firm commitment to ride-out any increased financial burden through a re-introduction fees, it must be noted that the figures discussed ranged between one hundred and say five hundred dollars; nothing like the levels levied upon overseas students.

The question of financial strain is a thorny one, for the results possibly mask the true situation. It was hypothesized that reductions and restrictions in TEAS and NEAT in the past had already excluded those closest to the financial brink. The most meaningful interpretation of the data is achieved when it is considered that business pressures were more extensive than financial problems. This admits there is strain, and reflects when the strain is most usually taken up; that the majority of mature age students continue to work, to support themselves and family rather than go out on a limb by studying full-time. The positive response to the question of financial problems indicates that mature age students as a group have resolved the situation to their satisfaction with a balancing of employment and finances. Merely because this balance appears to have been achieved successfully for most does not mean that the problem does not exist. The financial buoyancy of mature age students is not an indication of their affluence but is again a measure of their commitment and organizational abilities.

8.5 *Costs associated with mature age study at university*

When asked to indicate what they felt had been the major cost to them, in whatever terms, (financial, emotional, social, personal), nearly all the mature age students answered with the same thing in similar terms. This was that restrictions in time prevented them from participating as they would want in family and, to some extent, personal activities. The group covering this area numbered 26, with a further 4 experiencing emotional costs, 2 personal costs through disillusionment, and 2 financial. These figures do not account for the total sample of 51 because the remaining 17 either refused to consider that there had been at cost at all, or they agreed in their context the costs were minor, such as library fines.

There was a number of areas covered by restrictions of time. The major one was less time to spend with family. This caused tension and frustration, and in a number of cases had led to the student deliberately restricting study to devote more time to children and household responsibilities.

General socializing was the other main area of life adversely affected. There is nothing startling in the fact that mature age students have less time to socialize but the responses from friends to this are rather interesting: "my friends think my studying is marvellous, although I think they're glad it's not them (female, Arts, f/t)"; "those friends who have studied, or would like to, understand; others are resentful of my neglect (female, Arts, p/t)"; "people no longer drop in, they understand my position and realize it has to be up to me to make the contact (female, Arts, p/t)"; "I find my friends have been intimidated by me doing study; and people I meet as acquaintances (especially men) are very intimidated (female, Arts, f/t)"; "some friends felt that I had become an intellectual (female, Arts, f/t)"; "I'm not prepared to keep house and entertain and a lot of my friends don't understand that . . . but so many people, women, work or study now that it's common (female, Arts, p/t)".

This limiting of social participation for mature age students and its impact on the student's friends brings into focus general attitudes to education. It also places education in its social context, and outlines the sociological

currents within which mature age education flows: such things as female liberation/development; socio-economic aspirations and mobility; contemporary attitudes to employment and leisure.

Those who spoke of personal/emotional costs did so in terms of the strain of constantly adapting to new and often conflicting environments or of reaching their own high standards, "self-inflicted wounds" on the road to attaining their desires. The clashing of environments is one way of articulating the central problem for mature age students of operating as student, worker, wife/husband, parent, friend etc.: "the emotional cost involved in changing roles between work place, home, and the academic world is the major cost (male, Science, p/t)". This sort of strain often left students drained, physically and emotionally unable to capitalize on what time was available for family and friends.

Disillusionment with university was listed by two as their major cost: "I've wanted to come to university for 20 years, so naturally I'm disillusioned that many young students don't participate, and that 'getting a degree' is all that is important to many (female, Arts, p/t)".

It is important to mention that while the discussion was of costs, the tone of the comments was usually not of complaint, but of an inevitable situation the price of which was acknowledged and accepted, if painfully, for the benefits. The pressure of time is the main price. That they were not able to do as many things was not the regret that students expressed, rather it was that they could not do many essential things properly. There was regret, frustration, and guilt that students could not participate adequately in family matters, (and to a lesser degree social activities), nor the full range of university life.

8.6 *Benefits associated with mature age study at university*

The benefits of university study to mature age students need to be considered with several things in mind. The perception of benefits will depend in part upon what was anticipated. What a student expected to achieve in studying is relevant because it reflects the original motivation, and helps determine whether the objects of that motivation have been fulfilled, unfulfilled, or altered.

Naturally it was easier to talk about personal benefits than vocational gains because the former are more immediate, realized on a day-to-day basis. While some students had radically altered their career aspirations because of their experience at university, the long term vocational benefits of university study cannot be gauged at this time; but it is an important issue.

The area of benefits was discussed in the interview in such a way as to bring out those distinctions. Students were asked about the benefits, or presumed benefits, of attending university. The intention was to have them articulate why they had come, what they thought they would achieve either in getting a degree or having a degree.

This last distinction is of course the major division in expectations of university. There were those who saw the overriding benefit of study in the process of personal and intellectual development involved in getting degree. They may or may not have had definite vocational goals, but basically they

came for the study. For others the degree itself was a means to a better end: to a better job, mobility, security. In between these were those who had hoped from the beginning to combine the two, the experience and the product. It is interesting to note the numbers subscribing to each division, the characteristics particular to the divisions, and the changes which had taken place since entry.

There were roughly equal numbers involved in personal motivation (21) and dual motivation (22 personal and vocational), with only eight motivated exclusively by vocational considerations. This state of affairs would seem to be a blend of practical awareness and personal and intellectual idealism.

This even split was uniform throughout the Tertiary Intentions classification (covering the nature of previous involvement with tertiary education), except for those who had always wanted to attend. Here there was a strong bias towards purely personal fulfilment, for university had probably long been a goal from an educationally deprived background. Across the Job Relatedness classification the combination of personal and dual motivation remains dominant in each group. The "Other" grouping is exclusively personal or dual, and is effectively the grouping of those with little or no vocational relation to their study.

Those who came for purely personal reasons did so with the intention of developing their abilities and realizing a potential they believed, hoped, they possessed. Students spoke of broadening themselves, of wanting intellectual stimulation, and many of wanting to prove they could do it: "I wanted to see if I could do it, if I could achieve more than I had in the past (male, Arts, p/t)." Many came with a definite belief in the intellectual structure of university, which sometimes led to disappointment: "I came wanting discipline in my learning to formalize it . . . to improve myself as regards my job . . . I now believe this will not happen (female, Arts, p/t)"; "I had an idea university made people better, matured them. I'm disillusioned with this; it's all a matter of what you put in to it (and a lot put very little). Now I do it my way, I make the effort and I satisfy myself (female, Arts, p/t)."

An interesting group of those attending for purely personal reasons were those who felt they had been disadvantaged educationally when they were younger: "when I finished school there was no question of a young girl going to university, it simply was not considered (female, Arts, f/t)"; "my family were not in a financial position to send me to university; I went out to work as soon as I could (male, Economics, p/t)". For these people university was a chance to capitalize on untapped abilities and to reverse the restrictions placed on them by social mores and financial needs.

Professional considerations alone motivated a small number (8) to pursue a degree. This group tended to be those for whom a degree had become necessary, or highly advantageous: "I came to update my teaching qualifications (female, Arts, p/t)"; "I came to get a degree to enable me to find a job with more responsibility (female, Arts, f/t)"; "it seems everyone I work with has qualifications, I came to give me some chance of promotion and security (male, Economics, p/t)".

Those with dual motivation differed from those above in holding both long and short term goals, and saw their vocational development as an

extension of personal improvement, and vice versa: "I came to upgrade teacher qualifications, and saw university as more expanding and personally valuable than teachers' college (female, Arts, p/t)"; "I came to extend myself, to extend from the mother role . . . to enable me to have my life apart from my nearly grown children. I came wanting a job also, but in the same sense as extending myself and being involved in the outside world (female, Arts, p/t)".

Overall, the mature age students in the survey had come to university anticipating that it would play a big part in their personal development. Vocational aspirations were usually married to a belief in the personally enriching influence of academic life.

The discussion also covered whether university had fulfilled these expectations, or if the student's expectations had been altered by the experience of 18 month's study. There was a slight but pervasive shift in emphasis in students' perception of the benefits of study to them. This was a process of expansion, here the single was modified by the double purpose. It may have been a realization of new professional abilities and goals, or the personal immediacy of the learning experience: "I can now see opportunities in the general area opening up, I didn't come with definite job expectations, but I now know the area I want to go into (female, Arts, p/t)"; "I came to get a degree, but along the way I've begun to learn new things, to expand myself personally (male. Economics, p/t)".

There were two or three students who expressed general disillusionment with university, mainly because of what they considered low standards, the inflexibility of the institution, or the actual nature of the work. By far the most striking aspect of the students' experience was the personal benefit they had received in terms of confidence in social and intellectual areas: "I feel more confident in talking to other people, more aware of what is going on in the world (male, Arts, p/t)"; "I feel I am more interesting, I am able to handle myself in discussions much better (female, Arts, f/t)"; "the experience has been a tremendous ego-boost (female, Arts, f/t)"; "I am not as silly as I thought (female, Arts, p/t)".

The survey revealed mature age students to be a satisfied group, who came highly motivated and generally retained their enthusiasm. It can be taken from the literature that mature age students perform at least as well as N-types, but a question was included in the interview to discover if they were pleased with their first year results. They were not actually asked what grades they had received, only how satisfied they were. This was to gauge general academic satisfaction and to begin the interview with an easy topic. Of the 51 interviewed, 36 felt they were pleased or very pleased, 9 said they had expected better results, and 8 had discontinued or deferred.

The responses to this question brought the cost-benefit dichotomy sharply into focus. Many said they were pleased in the light of how little time they had had to devote to study because of sickness, family problems, job changes, etc. Students were classified as pleased even if they had just passed, or even dropped a subject, if they felt they had performed well despite unforeseeable circumstances.

Of the eight who had withdrawn, six had excluded themselves due to

non-academic problems such as sickness, family responsibilities, and financial or business commitments. Two of the six had technically failed, both having excluded themselves because of illness at such a late stage in the year that their withdrawal was registered as a fail. Each of the six expressed the desire and intention to return. One had already returned but to a different course at the same university. The remaining two students had withdrawn because of dissatisfaction with their courses; one of them had had no intention of completing a degree.

8.7 *Conclusions and recommendations*

The major conclusion from the findings of this survey has been the recognition of mature age students as part-time students. This re-definition is valuable in this context because it brings the central problems of mature age student into the foreground.

This re-definition is purely for practical purposes. To name these students mature age tends to concentrate too much on their age. This in turn throws into the spot-light any possible attitudinal anomalies. While there certainly are differences in attitudes due to age and maturity, these all appear very positive.

To focus on problems and difficulties it is more fruitful to consider part-time/full-time status as a function of age and its attendant responsibilities. The greatest differences that do exist between mature age students and traditional N-types lie not in attitudes to intellectual endeavour and academic excellence, but in practical matters pertaining to the running of the institution.

There are a number of recommendations that can be made in the light of this association of mature age students with part-timers. These all act to capitalize on the limited time available to students literally rushing in and out.

Attention given to the timetable would constitute recognition of mature age students' contribution to the institution and the difficulties they experience scheduling their time. Difficult as this flexibility may seem, because of the early-late split in attendance, the collection of data on student preferences for suitable times should provide the information necessary to improve the timetable. This kind of activity and the benefits deriving from it also shows the students that the university is concerned with their welfare.

There are a range of activities available to improve orientation and adjustment to the institutional environment. Prepared orientation packages could serve the role of reaching out to the student and beginning the process of preparation before the student sets foot on campus. This kind of specially prepared literature can also act as an on-going counselling/survival kit, directing the student to facilities and services designed to help (of whose existence the student may be ignorant.) Institutional support of these facilities is also one direct way the institution can assist mature age students. Whatever can be done to encourage and extend the activities of a mature age/part-time students' club and their efforts to provide personal contact for these students would be of direct benefit to the university community.

On the academic scene there is clearly a need for more accurate and

extensive course information. This in turn may at times lead to a re-evaluation of what are the practical prerequisites for a course, and to the development of activities which would allow students to acquire these prerequisites. Thought should be given to the fact that there is a pool of highly motivated students who, on their performance, are capable of overcoming considerable background deficiencies. There is possibly some scope for study skills courses, but on the evidence, and the literature on attrition, academic progress may perhaps be fostered more by encouraging the development of teaching methods. With the library there needs to be formal recognition of the difficulties of mature age/part-time students through an overt system flexible enough to cater for individual needs within its obligations to the community.

Within the personal sphere the range of institutional influence is limited. Activities which provide an opportunity for a student's family to be involved, such as orientation social events, art and craft classes, should act to make university less an unknown place for the family. This kind of personal experience of the university, even simply having been shown through some of the buildings, should help to foster an appreciation of the student's life and activities while he or she spends that precious time away from the family in classes, the library, the mature age students' club etc. There can be no recommendations regarding finance, other than the recognition of the financial tight-rope most mature age students walk. Any taking-up of slack will severely affect a balanced but precarious position.

These recommendations should improve the position of mature age/part-time students, and in many cases flow on to the wider student community. While this survey has shown the mature age students at this university to be generally satisfied with their position and progress it is worth considering the difficulties they have articulated as barriers to other potential students. Alleviate some of these difficulties and university study may become much more attractive to a wider section of the community. The institutional developments outlined throughout this chapter should be seen as precipitating a process of legitimatization of mature age study, where the institution and the community recognize the extended scope of tertiary education.

Section 3.

CONCLUSIONS

CHAPTER 9

Towards a theoretical perspective of the phenomenon of mature age students in higher education

Leo H. T. West

9.1 *Introduction*

There have always been some older students in higher education in Australia. However their current involvement is much more than an extension of the normal situation. The substantial growth and the level of involvement (see Chapter 1) characterize the current situation as something different — a new phenomenon in higher education in Australia (and, it appears, most Western countries). The research described in this monograph had the broad aim of attempting to understand this new movement. Particular chapters describe research studies aimed at more specific questions about different parts of the whole phenomenon: how do mature age students perform, the attitude of academic staff towards mature age students, and so on. Each of these informs about the specific aspects. It is the aim of this final chapter to provide some understanding of the total phenomenon. We must emphasize the "some"; our stirring of the pool has tended to muddy its waters in the process of exposing its contents. In order to provide this more general picture, we will attempt to "unpack" the total phenomenon in a different way — using as the units, the tertiary institutions, the community and the employment sector.

Each of these systems is complex in its own right. Each has undergone dramatic change in the last decade or so. For tertiary institutions, the 1970s brought a discontinuity in growth. Through the 1960s and early 1970s, universities and colleges expanded rapidly; money and students were readily available. In the late 1970s this all changed. Both money and students are now in a "steady state" or even "negative growth" situation.

During the same period, community attitudes to education have changed substantially — indeed there has been a revolution in participation in education. The proportion of the age cohort completing secondary school at the highest level quadrupled in the period 1955 to 1975 (see Figure 6.2). The tertiary participation rate also increased rapidly. In 1946, 3.5 per cent of the 17-22 years age cohort were undergraduate students in universities; in 1977 the equivalent figure was 9.5 per cent. (Williams report, 1979, p.15.) As a further index of this change, in the middle 1950s the total number of bachelor degree graduations each year was about 3000 in all Australian universities or about 31 per 100,000 of population; in 1974 it was more than 150 per 100,000 of population (Mann, 1978). These statistics are an index of a change in community attitudes and values toward education. By the late 1970s education (even higher education) had become available to, and was

perceived as desirable for, all segments of the community. This was particularly the case for women and those from working class backgrounds, as many of the comments made by mature age students (Chapter 6) attest.

For the employment sector, this has also been a decade of change. Technological change and the knowledge explosion have forced up the level of knowledge and skills required in most jobs. It is becoming increasingly clear that a single period of professional training immediately following secondary schooling is inappropriate for the workforce of the 1980s. At the same time, and not always for the same reasons, a creeping credentialism has occurred. Qualifications inflation is now as real as economic inflation. Sometimes this is overt, as in teaching, and now it seems, nursing. Sometimes it is covert but equally as real. In commerce, industry and the public service, the need for a tertiary qualification in order to "get the job" has increased considerably over the last decade.

Of course, the changes in each of these sectors are not independent. The causal chains are not always clear, but the interrelationships are obvious.

We contend that the flood of mature age students into higher education during the 1970s grew out of the complex interaction between these three systems. The discontinuity in growth in the institutions provided the places, the demands of the employment sector provided the pressures and motives for some mature age students, while the change in community values provided them for others. That very brief description is too simplistic. As stated previously the interaction between these three systems, and the flood of mature age students into higher education that has developed out of this interaction is complex. The findings from specific parts of the project that provide support for these conclusions are discussed below.

9.2 *The tertiary institutions*

Our basic proposition concerning the motives of institutions is that their acceptance of mature age students followed (or is following) a two stage process. Initially a demand-supply model existed, but most institutions have now moved to a demand-success model.

The demand-supply picture can be seen from a number of views. The cynic might suggest then an institution, experiencing a decline in normal entrants, accepts (even seeks out) mature age students as an alternative supply of EFTSs (Equivalent Full-Time Students). A more generous picture is that a slight relaxation of the over-supply situation allows an institution to offer the opportunity of entry to a particular group to which it feels a commitment. Probably the true picture lies between these two. Certainly universities in Australia have not touted for older students in the way some American Universities have (where at least one University has set up a "mobile enrolment station" in the car parks of local shopping centres). Departments in the faculties of Science and Engineering in tertiary institutions, who have experienced serious declines in demand in recent years, have admitted relatively few mature age students (see chapters 2, 5) — another indication that institutional reaction has not been motivated by expediency and self survival.

We hardly need evidence to support the supply-demand model. How-

ever there is some collaborative evidence in the research described in Chapter 2. Colleges of Advanced Education and Teachers' Colleges were likely to experience supply difficulties sooner than Universities (we are referring to the total group and not to comparisons between individual institutions). Consequently those colleges would be expected to be more "open" in their selection procedures for mature age applicants. This is clearly demonstrated by the data in Table 2.1.

However, once accepted, mature age students have turned out to be successful — in the broadest meaning of that term. They perform very well, if not better than students straight from school (Chapters 4 and 4); they have, in the opinion of staff, a positive influence on the course and a tutorial contribution that is considerably better than that of "normal" age students (Chapter 7). Senior administrators in institutions are positive towards mature age students. In the survey described in Chapter 2, 27 (28%) of the institutions made comments about the performance of mature age students, even though they were not asked to do so. Of these only one was negative. 14 stated that mature age students performed better and 12 stated that they performed just as well.

Thus an institutional commitment to mature age students has begun to develop, and as it does, institutions tend to change to a demand-success model, i.e. while the demand exists institutions will admit such students *because* they have been shown to be successful. This situation continues even if the supply of normal age students increases again. As previously noted (Chapter 2), some institutions have introduced special quotas for mature age students, others have given them preference.

On this basis it seems reasonable to predict that institutional attitudes towards mature age students will remain positive, and that places will continue to be available even if the supply of normal entrants increases again in the future. At the same time, it is evident that institutions are not always "geared-up" for mature age students, especially those who attend part-time. Those institutions who provide the types of extra services recommended in Chapter 8 will become the institutions most popular to potential mature age students. It is already clear that some institutions who have tried to "make it easy" for mature age students are benefitting with regard to demand.

9.3 *Mature age students: the potential population*

There are two broad groups of mature age people entering higher education who represent the potential population in the community. The first are those involved in a re-certification, re-qualification need. The second are people who, relative to today's youth, were disadvantaged with respect to higher education because of their year of birth. Before expanding on these two groups, we should comment that in this study we have ignored another group: the "deferrers" (those who are accepted for enrolment but defer until a later time). There is evidence from Europe (see Chapter 1) that the present decline in tertiary participation by the 17-20 age group, is not a rejection but a deferral of higher education. This is an issue that urgently requires some research in Australia.

The re-certification group consists (at the moment) of teachers, nurses and librarians (see Chapter 6), areas where the pressures to update qualifica-

tions are more overt than in other groups. However these pressures are beginning to occur in other occupations, and with the need to re-train, as some occupations disappear and others appear, this area of demand seems likely to continue. The term "re-certification" tends to give an unfair impression. In the study at Monash (see Chapter 6 and 8) most of the people who fell into this category were also motivated by intellectual and professional reasons.

A special sub-group are women wishing to return to work after some years out of the workforce. Some are no longer qualified for their original occupation (because of qualifications inflation), and some wish to change careers. There is a tendency in some quarters to characterize these people as a separate phenomenon. This present study tends to suggest that they are merely an index of what is to come in the workforce in general. Their motives are not different from those of similar mature age students who are still in the workforce. It is surprising in Australia that few institutions are offering updating courses in the mature students' discipline — especially in the wake of the knowledge explosion in many science areas. The National Science Foundation in the United States of America has, for ten years, funded "re-entry" programmes. For example, American University in Washington offers a programme for chemistry graduates to update their chemistry qualifications so that they can re-enter the workforce (*The Chronicle of Higher Education*, February 11, 1980).

The other major group of mature age students are the educationally disadvantaged (with respect to higher education), left behind when the changes in educational values, discussed above, opened up access to secondary and higher education to so many more of the younger generation. In Victoria, for example, there are an estimated 155,000 persons between the ages of 20 and 35 who have not completed secondary schooling but who are the intellectual equals of those who are presently doing so, assuming a constancy of intelligence across age cohorts. (This number is estimated from Figure 6.2 by projecting the 1976 secondary retention rate backwards.) These people may lack the formal qualifications, but there is little doubt about their capability to undertake higher education. (see Chapters 3, 4 7).

What is currently motivating them to do so? This is discussed in some detail in Chapter 6. The short answer is that some of them are turning to higher education as a means of fulfilment, satisfaction and achievement which is no longer being provided in their work. What finer motive could there be for undertaking higher education?

As a final concluding comment, is can be stated that the current crop of mature age students entering higher education are bright, motivated students who because of their high success are an asset to themselves, to society and to the institutions that accept them.

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